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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

BY

WILLIAM TEMPLE, *Canon of Westminster; Hon. Chaplain to the King*

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Sermons

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NOTE

THE first fourteen of the following sermons were preached at afternoon services in Westminster Abbey during the first year after my installation. They fall mainly into three groups, corresponding to three months of "residence." The first, which was my first sermon as a Canon of Westminster, was delivered on August 3rd, 1919, the anniversary, in the first year of peace, of the speech wherein Sir Edward Grey had in 1914 committed this country to its war-policy.

Sermon XV was preached in S. Martin's-in-the-Fields on Easter Day, 1918, at one of the darkest hours of the war. Sermon XVI was preached in Eton College Chapel on November 10th, 1918, when news had already come that the Kaiser had fled and news of the signing of the Armistice was hourly awaited. Sermon

26726

XVII was preached in New Quad at Rugby at a reunion when the number of Old Rugbeians present was almost exactly equal to the number of boys in the school.

The other two sermons are added because they fill in to some extent the outline of thought which those already mentioned sketch out. All the sermons here printed deal in some measure with that Fellowship with God which is the profoundest need and highest blessing of men. The fundamental fact about human life is that God, in His Love, has entered into fellowship with us; the loftiest hope for human life is that we may, in answering love, enter into fellowship with Him. This is not to be found in the devotional life alone, nor in the practical life alone, but only in the perfect blend of both.

W. T.

DEAN'S YARD,
WESTMINSTER.

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

I

THE SECRET OF PEACE

(Westminster Abbey, *August 3rd*, 1919.)

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. viii, 38, 39.

So the long argument is gathered up. S. Paul had been wrestling with great problems. His mind had been trained in the doctrines of Pharisaism; but he is confronted with the conviction that while the Law of Moses was of Divine origin and authority, yet Jesus of Nazareth, condemned under the Law and crucified, was the Christ of God. Further, he had been taught to believe that what God requires is conduct in accordance with precise

regulations; yet what has brought him into fellowship with God is the freely flowing Grace of God, the power of the Spirit controlling desires as well as conduct, both bestowing faith or trust in God and then in answer to that faith bestowing a more abundant Grace. Here are problems hard enough to tax the powers of the human mind. S. Paul has not shirked one of them; squarely he faces all. His method of argument is to us in its details partly irrelevant and partly unconvincing; but that is chiefly because his own triumphant conclusion has captured the mind of the race; just because of his mental travail, we are not called to tread the same path. But the broad principles of the argument remain unshaken, and its conclusion is the victorious conviction, firmly grounded, that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It was not only troubles of the mind that S. Paul had to confront. The tiny Christian community was beset with perils, of which perhaps the chief was the world's contempt. Persecution is bitter, but it is a stimulus to the faith that it does not crush. Neglect

and contempt are far more deadly foes. We know the influence upon our own minds of those who by learning or by status, or by general achievement, are eminent or distinguished; and we can estimate the trial to faith which lay in the fact that in the infant Church there were "not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." And for those who actively propagated the new and despised religion there were physical perils enough, as S. Paul's own history shows. You remember his own account of it. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Surely he had every right to summarise his own experience in the words of the Psalmist: "For thy sake we are killed

all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter." It is of realities and not of imaginations that he is speaking when he exclaims, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To such a faith, rising out of such an experience, our minds go back to-day in thankful aspiration. It is the anniversary of the day, five years ago, when there was delivered in Parliament by our Foreign Secretary the speech which set plainly forth the diplomatic history of the days preceding the outbreak of war. With notable courage and wisdom, Sir Edward Grey refrained from any appeal to racial passion; he scarcely even

appealed to patriotic feeling. He stated bald facts without comment or rhetoric; for the facts were more eloquent than any words could be. To him, in some degree at least, we owe it that our nation entered on the war in no spirit of aggressiveness or vindictiveness, but in the solemnly offered response to the call of a solemn duty. The war has issued in the triumph, broadly speaking, of the principles for which we waged it. But we have held our Peace celebrations. We have rendered thanks for our victory. We have realised, and certainly we realise to-day, that the end of the war does not involve automatically the end of strife, anxiety, and distress. What may be called the temporal lessons of this crisis have been set forth again and again; if we have not learnt them, it must be because we cannot learn them in our present frame of mind. The solution of our temporal problems is only to be found in the eternal sphere.

For what are those temporal lessons? Briefly stated, they are the futility of political organisation without change of heart; the impossibility of securing by any kind of force the only social order that will satisfy. We

have looked at the League of Nations and said wisely that only if men care more for mankind and for justice than for their own country and its interests can this new organisation produce the result for which it is set up. We have looked at industrial troubles and said wisely that only if men prefer patriotism and justice to personal or class interest can economic welfare or social peace be won. Those are the temporal lessons of this time; and though the teaching of Christ sums them up as no other does, yet any pagan or agnostic can read them as plainly as the most earnest Christian.

It is not chiefly moral principles that are lacking; what the world needs to-day is power to live by the principles which are professed. Such wise comments on the situation of the world as I have described really amount to this: If all men were unselfish instead of selfish the evils of the world would disappear. But how is that transformation to be accomplished? Many at least of the world's worst evils are the result, not of appalling and outrageous wickedness, but of the fact that the majority of men and women

are as good as we are and not better. Take some millions of people just like us, all generous with their superfluities but still putting self first, and in a few generations you will again have rich and poor living side by side, each ignorant of the lives the others lead; you will again have slums, and sweating, and casual labour, and the denial to many of the educational facilities that are needed to develop the powers which God gives His children. There are great criminals in the world; but even if all men reach the existing average of moral attainment, the worst evils will still continue. The real trouble of the world is that most of us are just average people.

How are we to rise above that average? Society may by various forms of pressure raise men and women to the level of its own conventions. But that leaves the problem still unsolved. If I am selfish, not grossly but yet predominently selfish, what shall make me unselfish? For it is certain that my own selfish will can never do it. If my will is selfish, it does not desire to be unselfish; there is the trouble. A man can never by his own strength put away the sin of his own soul.

There is much that he can do. He can curb rebellious impulses and brace a will that is only slack. But what most needs to be done he cannot do. In proportion as he is sincere he will exclaim with S. Paul: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Christianity is not only a system of moral teaching, it is fundamentally a gift of power. And this power is not only the encouragement given by the promise of attainment in the future; it is the certainty that comes from a victory already achieved. There we take our stand. We have indeed the promise of Christ, and it is a wonderful treasure. But we have also His accomplishment, and that is something of incomparably greater worth. Remember how He prayed to His Father and said, "I glorified Thee on the earth, by accomplishing the work that Thou gavest me to do"; and how just before He had said to His disciples, "In the world ye have tribulation; be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Christianity is the religion of a victory achieved. The Christian is indeed marked by a specially acute sorrow for his sin, for he

knows the wounds that it inflicts on his Divine Saviour. But the Christian is never frightened of his sin. He does not cower under its weight before a Divine Judge whose sentence he fears. For he knows that his Judge is first his Saviour; the sin he loathes is essentially a dead thing already, for Christ has killed it, and as soon as he resists it in the power of Christ, he finds that it gives way before him. He grieves for it, but lifts his sorrowing gaze in unabated confidence to the Captain of his Salvation. He knows where to find the strength he needs; and his sorrow when he falls is never near despair.

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so;
> That, howsoe'er I stray or range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change;
> I steadier step when I recall
> That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

Our first need, alike in personal and in public perplexities, is assurance—assurance of direction and assurance of power. It must not be self-reliant; there is in ourselves no strength or wisdom worthy of reliance. Our assurance alike of direction and of power must be the gift of God, known and acknowledged

as such. It is vain to hope for the Kingdom of God if God Himself is ignored or disobeyed or defied. In Him and only in Him is salvation from wars and the causes of wars, from social unrest and civil strife, as also from personal sins or failures.

Yet if we imagine the whole world truly turning to Him, how wonderful is the picture. Many and various are the forces which separate men from one another. Death is the chief of them, and with the severing power of death the world is grimly familiar to-day ; only less powerful than death to separate men from their friends is life with its various callings and activities. But neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are surrounded by influences which we cannot calculate or control, the movements of the world's opinion, the impulses of national or sectional ambition, and in all probability also the energising of wills other than human ; but neither angels nor principalities shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Men are divided by bitterness about things present, as they

contemplate the gross inequalities of life, by rivalries about things to come as their selfish hopes collide with one another; but neither things present nor things to come shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There and there only is the unity of the world. There we can find the direction for our forward movement and the power to follow it. We think of the friends whose earthly lives were paid as the price of our victory in the war. In dying they were not separated from the love of God; the life which now they live is lived in the nearer vision of that love. We think of our enemies, who for self-aggrandisement brought havoc on the world. The love of God never ceased to yearn over them and long for their readiness to open their hearts to its guidance. We think of all in every land who suffer to-day, the bereaved, the disabled, the women and children who in Central and Eastern Europe are hungry and cannot get food; over every one of them the love of God is ceaselessly watching. We think of the rival parties in our own English strifes—the profiteers, the miners, or whoever else it

may be ; we think of those who suffer through the continuance of their strife. Not one of them is separated from the love of God. If only each one could be brought to realise that love till his heart went out in answering love, and could then be brought to realise that the same love divine works and waits and suffers for every soul of man, all hatred and bitterness would vanish from the earth. How can I hate or despise another man, even though he be my own or my country's deadliest enemy, if I realise first that Jesus Christ my God died on the Cross for me, and then remember also that He died quite equally for the man whom I am tempted to hate or to despise ? If we love God, we cannot be indifferent to those whom He loves. In His eternal love and our answering love is the healing for the whole world's wounds.

Some day men will turn their eyes to the Cross of the Risen Christ, to the ascended throne of the Crucified, to find in Him their King as well as their Saviour. In His triumphant sacrifice all history finds its pivot and all hope its fulfilment. While we neglect what He has wrought, all our politics and diplomacies

can only shift but never remove the world's load of evil. There, and there alone, shall we find the sure foundation on which the ideal civilisation can rest. And we know that later, if not sooner, "the ends of the world shall remember themselves and be turned unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." Then will be fulfilled the promise of the angels' song, and the glory of God in the highest heaven will have its counterpart in true and lasting peace among men of goodwill on earth. That peace cannot be shaken and that glory cannot pass away. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

II

SACRAMENT AND MIRACLE

(Westminster Abbey, *August* 10*th*, 1919.)

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and wither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

. . ." Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. . . . For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."—S. John iii, 8; vi, 53–55.

These are two sayings associated with the two Sacraments which Christ in His earthly ministry appointed for His Church. At first sight they seem to contradict each other, or at least to represent diverging tendencies. The one appears to insist solely on the superiority of the Spirit to any forms or channels of operation, and is often quoted in justification of an indifference to forms or even of contempt for them. The other appears

to insist on a rigid observance of one particular form of worship, for though the discourse contained in the sixth chapter of S. John's Gospel is attached to the miracle of the feeding of the Five Thousand, it is of course utterly impossible to doubt its reference to the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood instituted at the last Supper.

It is notoriously perilous to interpret single sayings without reference to their context. If we consider the teaching of our Lord in these two discourses taken as a whole, we shall find the same balance of truth in each. Thus, to take the second first, we find that our Lord has just warned the multitude against coming to Him for material benefits and comforts. "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life." The sacramental feast, in which the physical food becomes nothing but the symbol and vehicle of the spiritual food, is contrasted with the feast, however miraculously provided, which had satisfied a bodily hunger. But this sacramental

feast is to be received in no mechanical way; for the Lord goes on to insist that the words He speaks, the expressions "flesh" and "blood," mean "spirit" and "life." "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you" (that is, "the expressions that I have used") "are spirit and are life." So the discourse as a whole expresses the perfect balance of true sacramental doctrine. The physical act of receiving the consecrated elements is by itself of no avail; it is in the spirit and life which are there symbolised and conveyed that all the value lies. Yet the requirement to seek that value through this means is absolute.

We find just the same balance in the discourse to Nicodemus. He was a man of some influence in high ecclesiastical circles. He has heard of the new Teacher and His movement. He comes to Him secretly, under cover of the night, and opens the conversation with compliments. Such phrases from such a man would surely be welcome; and if he does not commit himself too far, he may be able to help the new movement considerably

by representing it in a favourable light to the authorities. But his compliments and his prudence are brushed aside. He is told that, unless he can break with his old traditions and make a fresh start, he will never understand what forms the very heart and centre of the new movement which he is prepared to patronise. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." In answer to Nicodemus' plea that such a new beginning is as impossible as a literal second birth, the demand is made more explicit. He must, by submitting to baptism, publicly affirm that he is making a new start. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." And it is to prove the moral possibility of this, to show where he may find the power to overcome his natural hesitancy, that the familiar words are added: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." God's power is at work in the world. We see the evidences. We do not know the origin or destination of the

movements that are plainly fulfilling His will. They spring up suddenly; what they accomplish is seldom what their human founders had in mind. But they have upon them the marks of God the Holy Spirit. We shall find His power in them if we come out of our conventions and throw in our lot with them as we can feel the breath of the wind by only going out of doors. Nicodemus would find the power that would carry him to a public profession of faith by Baptism if, instead of coming to Christ secretly by night as an occasional visitor, he would consort with that little company to which the breath of the spirit was a familiar fact of experience. "We speak that we do know and bear witness of that we have seen." So the words comparing the motion of the Spirit to the winds of heaven, "whose pathless march no mortal may control," quoted so often, and quite justly, to declare the impossibility of confining the Grace of God to particular channels or forms, are yet part of an exhortation to a particular enquirer to go through the form of Baptism and seek the Grace of God through that particular channel. Here, therefore, once more

we find the perfect balance of sacramental doctrine.

In every age the Church has to perform a double duty; it has to adapt itself to the prevailing habits of mind and currents of thought in such a way as most effectively to commend the Gospel with which it is entrusted; but it has also and above all things to take care that what it commends is indeed the Gospel and not some substitute. In our own time the chief tendencies of thought are determined by the fact that the intellectual activity of many decades has been mainly directed to the understanding of physical nature. The development of natural science is no doubt in a quite real sense a revelation of God to our time. The faculties which make it possible are God's gift; the world which we have come to understand so far more fully than our forefathers is God's world. As men pursue scientific study they are really increasing their knowledge of what God has done or is doing and of the processes by which He works. Religion neither has nor can have any quarrel with Science.

But every form of study has its limitations.

There are spheres to which it does not apply and facts which it cannot explain. But in the day of its victories, its limitations are liable to be overlooked. So it comes about that to-day men's minds are possessed by the achievements of natural science. Popular thought is as usual about twenty or thirty years behind the experts. Among actual students of physical science there is already visible a steady reaction from the former negative attitude towards the spiritual world and its control of the material, but this has hardly as yet reached the ordinary intelligent man who is not himself a student. So it comes about that on all sides the cry is raised : " Why should the Church insist as it does on miracles ? or on sacraments ? There is a whole army of men and women ready to work for the betterment of mankind under the leadership of Christ, but not prepared to stultify their intellects by supposing that there is some inviolable sanctity about particular forms of worship, or that God has on certain occasions interrupted the unvarying order which He has Himself imposed upon the world by acts of the kind called miracles.

How can these things matter? Why not abandon all insistence on them, and call all men of good-will to stand together, working and even fighting for the Kingdom of God that Christ proclaimed?"

So men call to us; and we recognise at once the influence of a state of mind fashioned by occupation with the problems and the methods of natural science. We have to meet the challenge, first by asking whether its contention is true; and then, if it seems to be true either not at all or only in part, by trying to confront it with the fuller truth in such a way that this may be commended. The mind that is engrossed by natural science, as the public mind of the last half century has tended to be, is always disposed to be impatient of insistence on the supernatural. It seeks and publishes the truth to be found in Nature and its processes, and tends to think that this is all the truth there is. There it hopes to find God; in some measure it does find Him; and it becomes impatient of the requirement to seek Him elsewhere.

A wise man once said that men are nearly always right in what they assert and wrong in

what they deny. It is true that the physical world is God's world. If that were not true, the Divine Word could never have become flesh; the Water of Baptism, or the Bread and the Wine of the Eucharist could never be more than conventional symbols of spiritual realities. It is because the physical world is God's world that its matter can become the real embodiment of His very Life in the Incarnation, the real vehicles of His spiritual energy in the Sacraments.

But when we turn from natural history to human history—and the attention of men is inevitably so turning at the present time—it is impossible to remain content with a God who is known only through the processes we contemplate. There are, it is true, ugly aspects of the world of physical nature; but it is possible to overlook them in the magnificence of the whole order. In the story of men's activities the ugly aspect cannot be overlooked. In that sphere we shall not find proof of a God whom we can love and worship. There is Law here, sure enough; and in some respects it is a law of righteousness. But we cannot declare that justice is always

done. Very often the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer ; and even the justice that is done is harsh and unrelenting. If God is only in the world and not also above the world He is not a God whom we can love and worship. Moreover, if God is only in the world and not also above the world, what hope is there of deliverance ? Yet certainly there is need of deliverance.

If men could have won from experience what they need to save them from all that spoils their lives, they would have learnt it by now. But too plainly they have not learnt it. Men are not won from the self-seeking that desolates the earth merely by seeing the desolations. We do indeed proclaim aloud the duty of public spirit and self-sacrifice ; but we go on in the old way ourselves. Is there or is there not a God of righteousness above and beyond the world of ordinary experience ? Has He or has He not taken some definite and decisive action ? Does He or does He not now constantly offer the means whereby men who are body as well as soul may receive His living power into their inmost selves ? These are the

questions that are of greatest import to an age like ours.

Now I am not claiming that, if the truth of the Gospel miracles and the efficacy of the Church's sacraments are denied, all those questions must be answered with a sorrowful "No." But I do claim that the miracles and the sacraments, if accepted, guarantee a joyful "Yes." Take the two miracles of the Creed. Men say very often words like these: "I believe that Christ is Divine and that He is now alive; why should you make so much of His alleged Birth of a Virgin, His alleged physical Resurrection?" You see, it is the same plea; the general truth being admitted, why should we trouble about its particular mode or form of actualisation? Now, certainly the Incarnation of God in Christ is more important than the mode of its occurrence; and the eternal activity and intercession of Christ is more important than the mode of His emergence from physical death. But the mode is not therefore totally without significance. If Jesus Christ was indeed born of a Virgin Mother, then His Birth was a Divine Act pure and simple; the

part played by the human will in His coming is the submission and receptivity of the Blessed Virgin; the activity is God's and His alone. And if that be true, then, beyond all further question, God has taken definite and decisive action for our deliverance. Again, if He carried His physical frame through death, that proves beyond all further question that His supremacy is not confined to a spiritual sphere which we can only realise in part, but is a fact here and now in the world we know and extends to the very particles of matter.

I am not dealing with the question of truth. That must be investigated on its own merits. But it is often suggested that the question is of no practical interest or spiritual importance; and that is not the case. The Church which believes that these things actually happened is bound to insist on them as illustrating and establishing its faith in God and the deliverance that He has wrought.

But though God took definite and decisive action in Jesus Christ, and offers us special means of access to Himself, He is at work in all the world as well. We rob the Incarnation

and the sacraments of half their value if we isolate them from the great movements of the world. Having found God there, we must find Him in Nature and in History. Nature and History will not of themselves reveal Him in more than the smallest fragment. But having seen Him as He is in Jesus Christ, we can afterwards find Him in History and in Nature. We ought to seek and find Him wherever the marks of His Spirit are discernible. There are many who deny Him and yet follow His motions. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Wherever we hear the call to fellowship, to heroism, to self-denial, we hear the voice of God, even though he who utters it denies the very existence of God. From such we must not turn away. We must co-operate with them, telling them, as we may have opportunity, of the true source of all in their endeavour that is noble. So we shall give fuller reality and expansion to our own faith; and perhaps we shall lead our less happy comrades to our fuller knowledge of the truth of God.

But while we recognise the activity of God on every hand, and seek to unite ourselves

with that activity wherever we may find it, we shall constantly return to His definite and decisive act in the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, from which our own confidence and assurance are derived; we shall constantly use those means of Grace wherein the power of God, everywhere at work, is offered to us in a form enabling us to appropriate it in its fulness for use in His service.

Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven; Jesus Christ, Man risen and ascended, who ever pleads before His Father's love the redeeming power of His sacrifice, and ever offers to us His own dedicated Human Nature, the Body and the Blood, so that sharing His humanity we may be united in Him with the Godhead: here is the centre of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. We know that the wind of the Spirit bloweth where it listeth; and we know that, working through our Christian parents, it carried us, before we could say yes or no, to the baptism wherein we were made members of Christ and has ever been at hand all the days since then to sustain our

loyalty. We know that our great need in our everyday discipleship—in office, or factory, or shop, or school, or in our own homes—is spirit and life; and we know that we have received these in the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Son of Man. For His Flesh is meat indeed, and His Blood is drink indeed. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

III

"INASMUCH"

(Westminster Abbey, *August* 17*th*, 1919.)

. . . . "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."—S. Matthew xxv. 40, 45.

In this chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel there are brought together three parables of judgment. In various ways they are supplementary to one another, but in one main point they unite to emphasise a single truth. In each of the three condemnation is pronounced, not upon those who have done some positive wrong, but upon those who have failed to do something that was right. The five foolish virgins had failed to provide themselves with oil for their lamps; the wicked and slothful servant had failed to gain increase by means of the talent that he had

received; the souls placed on the left hand of the Judge had failed to do works of mercy and kindness for which they had opportunity. The condemnation of the world is chiefly visited on those who do wrong things; the condemnation of Christ is specially uttered against those who fail to do right things. No doubt those who do wrong persistently and make no effort to amend are involved in condemnation. If one of the ten virgins had wantonly broken her lamp instead of only letting it go out through negligence; or if the man who received the one talent had not even kept it safe, but had squandered it on his own amusement; that would have been something still worthier of condemnation than the failures that are recorded. There are those who not only neglect the Son of Man in the person of His little ones, but even directly injure Him by cruelty or evil suggestion; and there are stern words about those who cause His little ones to stumble.

But if the heart is not utterly hardened and the conscience atrophied, there is always the possibility that the wrong act may kindle remorse and so become the means to amend-

ment of life. The man or woman who is regarded by all neighbours as a moral outcast can hardly suffer from spiritual self-complacency. Those who do acts of wickedness have these very acts to spur their conscience and destroy their pride. The state from which we need to be roused by repeated warnings is that of unaspiring respectability, free alike from all positive vice and all positive virtue. It is so easy for those who are what the world calls good, that is to say those who commit no crimes and practise no unlawful indulgences, to become self-satisfied and hard-hearted. But that is a condition quite as remote from fellowship with God, who is love, as is the life of passion and indulgence. Indeed the latter is often the nearer, by virtue of its generous impulses, to the ardour of the Love Divine.

The failures set forth in the three parables are different; they refer to the devotional life, the moral life, and to that peculiar blend of both which is the special glory of the Christian religion. In the first of the parables the ten virgins represent the waiting Church. All have their lamps shining; in outward

appearance there is no difference between them. All, as we should say, are regular Church-goers. But some have kept a fresh supply of oil for their lamps; their worship is a living communion with the source of spiritual life. The others have no fresh oil; their lamps shine like the others, but at last go out. And it is no doubt part of the significance of the parable that these lamps are found to be going out just as the Bridegroom approaches. The hollowness of a formal religion, which has really lost its life, is only detected when the crisis comes, and in the presence of the Lord who is no longer worshipped in spirit and truth but only in word and outward observance.

The parable of the talents deals mainly with the sphere of moral action. Everyone of us has gifts which ought to be used for the service of God and man. Everyone has some real and positive contribution to make to human welfare. We all recognise that the idler or the waster is a social nuisance. If a man eats the produce of the world and enjoys the protection and amenities of a civilised society, while merely amusing himself

and contributing nothing in social service, all men can see that he is a parasite, living on the social organism and giving nothing to it. But most of us would be inclined to say that all that can be actually required of a man is that he should give as much as he takes; he must pull his own weight in the boat and not be a mere passenger. His talent should be as good when he gives account of it as it was when he received it. But the parable does not encourage so easy a view: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The diversity of gifts is fully recognised. And no doubt the realisation that our gifts are small is itself a temptation. The man who received ten talents had a great stimulus in the very scale of his opportunity; he was able to render a distinguished service. The man who only received one had no such encouragement. His service could not be conspicuous. He despaired of satisfying his master whom he knew to be an austere man making large demands. Is not that what many feel as they face the magnitude of the

world's need and the smallness of their own capacities? Many a man sees things that should be done, but feels powerless even to make a beginning with tasks so huge. He settles down to an ordinary honest life, paying his own way by his own work, but abandoning all hope and at last all desire to make the world anything different from what it is. It suffers no loss through him; he does no harm. And when he gives his account he will be able to plead that he returns all that he received. The talent is still of full value. "I took great care of it," he will say; "I wrapped it up in a napkin."

The third parable draws the other two together and in doing so supplies the motive which may overcome the doubts and hesitancies of the unprofitable servant, and also the folly of the foolish virgins. Moral enthusiasm is hard to sustain if we are confronted with the problem of a world that needs nothing less than renewal, while we have only our own energy to draw upon. The devotional life is liable to become formal and dead, even when conscientiously followed, if it is separated from moral activity. One of the greatest

dangers to the Christian life lies in our tendency to allot two different spheres to the two great commandments and to suppose that love towards God finds its expression inside the church-building while love towards our neighbour finds its expression in the world outside. But there should be no such division. The church-building is not more sacred than any other place; "the earth is the Lord's and all that therein is." The church-building is the place set apart for our remembrance of the sacredness of all places. God is always near us, but we remember His presence more vividly if we keep some places free from other concerns so that in them our minds may dwell on His perpetual presence and our hearts rejoice in it. Often and often our love to God is best expressed by some act of love to our fellow-men; often and often our love towards our neighbour is best expressed by prayer for him in the place where we most easily approach the throne of the Divine Love.

I said just now that a peculiar glory of the Christian religion is to be found in its union or blend of the devotional and of the moral life and that this parable expresses that union

and thereby draws together the teaching of the other two. It is the discovery, or more accurately the revelation, that God is Love which alone perfectly effects this union. The Prophets of the Old Testament knew that God is righteous and requires righteousness of His worshippers. Yet worship and righteous dealing are for them two things, though supplementary to each other. For the Christian they are one thing. S. John is not content to plead with us that if we love God we should love our brethren also. He adds to his plea the clear declaration that, if a man does not love his brother, that is a proof that he does not really love God at all. "If a man say, 'I love God' and hateth his brother, he is a liar." In the perfected civilisation of the new Jerusalem there is no special place set apart for worship, because the whole city is realised as God's dwelling place and all its life is worship.

When our devotional life seems to dry up and to become an empty form, it is often, though of course not always, because it is finding no appropriate expression in moral activity. But that can hardly continue if we

really believe that the Christ whom we adore, in whose Name we present our prayers, and whom we receive in His own sacrament that He may become the very life of our souls, is waiting in the souls of those whom we neglect or despise for the word of kindness or the helping hand that we can offer if we will. Of what avail is it that I glorify Him in His sanctuary or adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament, if when I meet Him in the street I turn away from Him, or if I leave Him to languish uncared for in the prison? Because He is perfect Love, He is perfectly united in the bonds of love with all who in virtue of His incarnation are His fellow-men. As we serve them we serve Him. When we neglect or ignore them, we are ignoring or neglecting Him. What wonder then if worship becomes cold and dead while this continues. But what power there is in any worship, that is still real and sincere, to drive men forth to service and thereby to the rekindling also of their devotional ardour.

The services spoken of are simple, and in the simplest service of those who lack, service is given to Christ. But it is not always in

simple fashion that service can be rendered. We have all learnt, for instance, that only seldom can real good be done by giving to beggars. Something more than perfunctory giving of our superfluities is wanted. The man who asks for money may really be needing trust and the sense that someone cares for him enough to want to see him living a useful life. Very often the giving of money is a purely selfish indulgence of feelings that are stirred or torn by the appearance of misery or of personal charm combined with want. We give ; so we satisfy our feelings ; and we think no more. Is that our love and worship for the Christ who suffers before us in His little ones ? It is true that we cannot always, or indeed often, give the time that is needed to offer ourselves the service that will really help. But then we ought to support to the utmost those who are giving that service and spend their lives in giving it. And in the modern world we should use our influence as citizens to secure that the State, which is just our united strength organised for action, effectively remedies the conditions which cause misery, and effectively helps those who

bring misery on themselves. How many of us have ever reflected, for example, that we as Christian citizens are responsible for the conditions to which our fellow-citizens who are condemned to imprisonment are subjected? We cannot all be visitors in gaols; but we can all insist that the conditions in gaols should be such as may encourage reformation instead of such as are bound to be degrading. And probably that is the way by which most of us could most surely win the greeting: "I was in prison and ye came unto me."

That is a single illustration; but it serves to represent the principle applying to all the various spheres. And it leads to the other side of the matter. When the State takes charge of people's welfare, whether by way of discipline or in other ways, or when benevolence is scientifically organised, there is a great danger of hardness and unsympathetic treatment. We all know of men and women who work with great self-sacrifice in the cause of social welfare and yet seem hard and unsympathetic. They give their goods to feed the poor; they are quite ready to give their bodies to be burned; but they have not

love. And we feel that, if untutored impulse can only do harm when it seeks to be charitable, there is equally little hope that this laborious conscientiousness can do any real good. We sum up our objection to it in the familiar phrase "red tape." It appears whenever individual men and women are treated as merely "cases." At its root the trouble is simply lack of love.

But everything is altered for one who can see Christ waiting and suffering in every unhappy child of man. This woman whom we have given up as hopeless is not hopeless. Christ in His unfailing love is always with her. If we give free scope to the Christ-spirit in ourselves it will find and link itself to the Christ-spirit in her, and make a space for its saving energies among all the degrading conditions and distracting passions. That man who seems so weak that no fresh start is of any use to him is not really weak. The Almighty Christ is with him, and if we give scope to the Christ-spirit in ourselves it will find and link itself to the Christ-spirit in Him, and make space for its saving energies despite the atrophied conscience and the dissipated

will-power. What we do for these we do for Him; what we deny to these we deny to Him.

It is Christ who pines when the poor are hungry; it is Christ who is repulsed when strangers are not welcome; it is Christ who suffers when rags fail to keep out the cold; it is Christ who is in anguish in the long-drawn illness; it is Christ who waits behind the prison doors. You come upon one of those who have been broken by the tempests of life, and if you look with eyes of Christian faith and love, he will lift a brow "luminous and imperial from the rags" and you will know that you are standing before the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

Christ brought to the world a new conception of royalty. He rules by love and not by force. That, as He expressly said, is the difference between His Kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. His most regal act was the supreme self-sacrifice whereby He would draw all men to Himself and make them willingly obedient to Him for ever. In full harmony with this, He never speaks of Himself as King except on one occasion only. He

accepts from others the title of Messiah with its kingly connotation, but the only time when He speaks of Himself as King is when, in this parable of the sheep and the goats, He identifies Himself with the failures of the world and the outcasts of society. "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand. . . . I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Civilisation, as we know it, produces much human refuse. Slum-dwellings, long hours of work, underpayment, child labour, lack of education, prostitution; all these evils are responsible for stunting and warping the development of souls. Things are improving we hope. But unless we are exerting all the strength that Christ gives us in ending these bad conditions, then the responsibility for wasted lives lies at our door, and from the streets of cities or the lanes of country sides the cry goes up through the lips of their Saviour and our Judge: "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto

me." There are difficulties to be met and problems to be solved. Hasty action may do more harm than good. But the first requirement is the steady determination to end whatever cramps or confines the Spirit of Christ in His and our fellow-men. If we learn to see Him where He has taught us that He is, we shall bring the fervour of devotion into our civic action and the reality of civic action into our worship. Above all, we shall ease the age-long agony of our dear Lord's heart. We feel only our own sorrow and that of our own few friends. But He feels the burden of all the sorrows that all men feel. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow." But if our hearts are open to His love, then that love will work through us in redeeming acts to those who at present, perhaps, have no knowledge of that love, and the loving Lord, who bears our griefs and carries our sorrows, shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

IV

THE ESSENCE OF IDOLATRY

(Westminster Abbey, *August 24th*, 1919.)

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols."—I. John v. 20, 21.

It is possible and even probable that these are the last words of the whole Bible to be written. If so then the Bible ends as it may almost be said to begin with the assertion of the true God and the warning against idolatry. Idolatry is the offence most frequently and most unsparingly denounced in the writings of the Old Testament; it is the sin against which we are warned in these closing words of the New. But S. John has a great advantage over the prophets of the Old Israel in that he has a quite definite standard by which to

judge whether any particular act of worship is idolatrous or not. Is it worship of the true God who is revealed in Jesus Christ? That is the test for him, and it must be the test for us.

The prophets of ancient Israel, from Moses onwards, condemned the bowing down before images as idolatrous. The second commandment forbade all effort to mould visible forms of the invisible God. It is easy to understand this when we remember what kind of forms the Israelites were tempted to fashion. The idols of Jehovah which were made at different times were not at all like the statues in which Greek sculptors tried to achieve a beauty so exquisitely perfect that it should be a worthy symbol of "Him that is true." Aaron employed no Pheidias with a sublime conception of Zeus or of Pallas Athene; Jeroboam called on no Praxiteles with his dream of the physical perfection of Hermes. On the contrary, priest and king alike, in the biting words of the Psalmist, "turned their glory into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay." The satire points to the true ground of objection to idolatry: it lowers the conception of God. The real harm of the thing

does not consist in the fact that the worshipper actually offers his devotion before some picture or image ; that may be a very wise method of assisting true devotion to the true God. The essence of idolatry is the holding of a false and unworthy conception of God, and any image which in fact tends to lower our conception of God is rightly condemned as an idol. To the use of pictures or statues as aids to devotion there is, of course, no valid spiritual objection.

It must be admitted that the prophets spoke in phrases only appropriate to the spiritual conditions of their own time and place. The Jews were apparently not highly gifted with visual imagination. If you try to put together in one picture all the sublime symbolism which is fearlessly combined in the Figure of the Son of Man in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, or in the description of the New Jerusalem in the last, you will realise at once that the writer never made this attempt himself or expected his readers to make it. Each detail is chosen for its own significance, and there is a total absence of that artistic impulse which subordinates the

parts to the significance of the whole. Consequently there scarcely appeared in Israel the attempt to find in beauty the adequate expression of truth. The idolatry condemned in the Old Testament was not any effort to make worship beautiful and therefore worthy ; it was an apparatus of images which purchased a sense of the real presence of God at the cost of all that makes Him worthy of our worship. So images were condemned altogether, and the Holy of Holies was a space without an image.

But in another sense that very emptiness was an image of the unimaginable, just as the great statue of Zeus at Olympia was an embodiment of the incomprehensible. And in this sense there can be no religion without images or means of representing God to our minds. We may use forms of words alone ; or we may use the rhythm and melody of music ; or we may use painting and statuary ; or we may use the consecrated elements of sacramental worship ; or we may use all of these at once. But some such means we simply must have. Deliberate silence is itself a mode of expression and therefore an image.

If we may not even go so far as to express in significant silence the Ineffable Name of God, we cannot worship at all. Without such means of expression there can be no mental activity of any kind.

The prophets who will not countenance worship offered before a statue are ready enough to endow the infinite and almighty God with voice and hands, with eyes and mouth, in the language that they use about Him. But they know the spiritual danger of material images; they do not know the spiritual aspiration that such images may express and assist. They assume that those who pray or worship before images are praying to or worshipping the image itself; and it is doubtful if anyone has ever actually done this. So far the satire of, for example, the Second Isaiah is to some extent beside the mark. The main contention, however, remains. Whatever tends to lower or degrade the conception of God is to be condemned. The use of images is to be condemned just so far as it in fact does this.

But some form of representation is needed. We cannot worship abstract power or love

abstract holiness. The prophets clothe God with all manner of human attributes; the great Greek sculptors produce images of more than human beauty. When Christ came He gave to men what they had sought to supply for themselves by means of their idols and other forms of image; He gave a quite definite and real representation of God. He is the express image of God; all other images are idols, not because they are material, but because they are inadequate. And for the same reason all thoughts of God which are not true of Christ are idolatrous; all prayer to God which we should shrink from offering to Christ is idolatrous; all worship of God which Christ would reject is idolatrous. In Christ we see the Father; "this is the true God and eternal life; my little children, guard yourselves from idols."

Idolatry is the supreme offence, the root of all sin. If a man is idolatrous, that is, if he has a wrong conception of God, then the more religious he is the worse will his character become. We sometimes hear harsh and unsympathetic natures excused because they are so earnest; but earnestness itself, if

directed to anything other than the service of the true God, Who is love, is a source of harshness, not its excuse. It is not a counterbalancing virtue but the initial vice. It is far better for a man to be an atheist or an agnostic than a devout worshipper of Moloch, even if he calls Moloch by the name of Jehovah. It is our thoughts and not the words in which we clothe them which determine whether our religion is idolatrous or not. Many prayers are offered in Christian phrases which are Jewish, or even heathen, in spirit.

Let us test our own outlook on life and our own devotions by this criterion; and let us begin low down in the scale of popular misconception. During the South African War a soldier received a wound which he thought would be fatal; as he fell he was heard to say "That is just like God." He recovered, and a chaplain who had heard his words asked him why he had spoken as he did. He answered that that morning he had torn a sheet out of a Bible to wipe his razor after shaving, and he supposed that God was paying him out. He plainly thought of God as rather like a big boy at a preparatory

school, determined to find some opportunity of avenging any personal slight or insult. He was an idolater. The heathen, who "in his blindness bows down to wood and stone," is no more idolatrous. You cannot imagine Christ acting so, therefore you cannot without idolatry imagine God acting so.

That is an illustration drawn from a deep but not at all exceptional ignorance. Let us turn to what we remember of the public utterances made during the war just ended. There were those who told us that because our cause was just we were bound to win; God would not let justice be defeated. But the cause of Christ was righteous as no other cause can ever be; yet Christ was not saved from the Cross. He rose indeed from the grave, but only His disciples knew it. There was no victory of the kind that involves defeat of the adversary until years and centuries had run their course. Both then and many other times in history God carried the righteous cause to triumph by means of the spirit in which its champions have faced defeat. To think that because you are right God will give you worldly success or victory

is idolatrous. It is worthy of note that the prayer which our Lord taught us could have been offered by an Englishman and a German, kneeling side by side, both meaning exactly the same thing.

At the beginning of the war we used to laugh at the German Emperor for his assurance that God was on the German side; on the day of the declaration of war he bade the citizens of Berlin hurry to the churches and pray. Perhaps he only meant that their first act should be to dedicate their wills and their arms to God's service; if so, he did well. But the phrases used suggested that he wished them to engage the Almighty in their support before His favour could be secured by rival claimants. If such a thought was in his mind, he was speaking idolatrously. But are we sure that our own intercessions were entirely free from the same idolatry? Have our thanksgivings for victory been free from it? It is good for us to examine our souls in regard to such questions.

Turn to another sphere. Our forefathers were ready to accept any epidemic or other scourge as a direct visitation of God, and

resign themselves to whatever it might bring. The advance of medical science was undoubtedly retarded by this habit of mind. But as soon as we turn to the Gospels we see that such resigned acquiescence is idolatrous. Christ plainly regards disease as an enemy to be attacked and abolished. It is true that nothing can happen except by God's permission; it is true that whatever happens He is with us to carry us through and turn the evil to our good; but it is equally true that when He lets evil come, His will is that we should fight and destroy it. The conduct of Christ is quite decisive on this point.

We have not been sufficiently thorough in our interpretation of God by means of His full revelation of Himself in Christ. We have often kept a conception of God based on the Old Testament, and even on sources of far less value, and have added something from the New Testament side by side with this. In the result popular thought has conceived the heavenly Father as only a stern potentate, and Christ as only the gentle Saviour. Justice becomes concentrated in one, and mercy in the other. In the Middle Ages there was a

similar tendency to concentrate all gentleness in the Blessed Virgin Mary and to regard our Lord as only the stern Judge. All such divisions are false in principle. If we are Christians we are to think of God in terms of Christ. Christ is the crown, and therefore the criterion, of all revelation. Whatever in other revelation conflicts with the revelation made in Him must be a distortion due to the frailty or limitations of the human soul through whom that other revelation came.

But we must be firmly honest with ourselves. It is Christ as He truly lived in Whom the Father is revealed, and to find out that truth we must constantly read the Gospels with close attention and alert imagination. The very familiarity of the words makes it easy to read or hear them without really bringing before our minds that of which they speak. Meanwhile, a conception is formed by hymns that we happen to like, or pictures that we happen frequently to see, and such conceptions, casually formed, are usually one-sided at best. The Divine character, as we see it in the life of Christ, is not one-sided either in sternness or in gentleness.

Both are found there as occasion calls for them.

But as we read we must remember that it is not only of long past episodes that we learn; it is of the Eternal God. It is God who calls us to take up the Cross and follow Him in the path of sacrifice; it is God who challenges our capacity to drink the cup that He drinks; it is God who drives from His sanctuary those who defile it with their greed and worldliness; it is God who pleads with our weakness and inconstancy—"Could ye not watch with me one hour?" It is God, the Eternal God, Who when He is reviled reviles not again, and when He suffers threatens not. It is God, the eternal God, who wins the conquest over death and sin by enduring in Himself their worst assault.

His love is no weak amiability, but the strong, exacting love of perfect holiness. His peace is no endless repose, far from the conflicts that distract the earth; it is the inflexible will that is not daunted by any sacrifice, or turned aside by any seduction, but finds in all conceivable conditions the opportunity to be constant to its own nature

of love. His royal supremacy is not the crushing down of opposition or the annihilation of resisting souls, but the winning over of opponents and the redemption of sinners from their sin. All this, and much more that we read of Christ in the Gospels, is the truth, now and always, concerning God Almighty. "This is the true God, and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols."

V

THE ETERNAL GOD

(Westminster Abbey, *August* 31*st*, 1919.)

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."—Psalm xc. 1, 2.

"Our fellowship is with the Father."—I. John i. 3.

The heart of religion is communion with the eternal. We rise above the tumult and conflict, above even the moral effort, of our normal life to the realm of eternal truth where the ideal is always realised, and perfection alone is actual. Our Lord taught us to pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. In our best worship we ascend in heart and mind to the heaven where that Will is always done. We cannot permanently live there. Duty calls us back to the world of moral striving; our faults of character stand

out in the clear light of the Divine Presence, and we sink from adoration to penitence even as Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips," so soon as his eyes had seen the Lord of Hosts and his ears heard the song of the attendant seraphim. But though we cannot dwell permanently on the heights of adoration, all our spiritual health depends upon our rising to them from time to time, and it is good for us to fix in our minds by deliberate meditation the various aspects of our vision in those sacred moments.

Among these, and perhaps chief among them, is the eternity, the changeless perfection, of God. The world in which we live is always changing; it derives its whole meaning from the changes that take place in it. The development of natural science has shewn us that this is true of the animal and physical world, as well as of human history. In the first impetus of this idea men began to speak of the evolution of God and to insist that He, too, derives His significance and value from the changes that pass over Him. No doubt the course of history, natural and human, deeply concerns the Creator. No doubt His

purpose in Creation is progressively realised, and to that extent there is a progress from glory to glory which may be ascribed to God Himself. But if we take this development to be the last word, we make nonsense of the universe, and we deny the intimations that come through worship at its best and truest.

When we lift our souls to God in adoration we do not have to ascertain afresh each time what degree of perfection He has now attained. He is always the same ; our understanding of His glory may develop, but He Himself is unchanging. What we find Him to be, that Abraham also found when He communed with God and said, " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? " What we find Him to be, that will unborn generations still find when science has revolutionised a dozen more times the external ordering of life, or when (God grant it may be so) the Spirit of Christ has transformed men's souls so that war and greed and bitterness are known no longer. Men change ; if they cease to change they are dead. But God does not change ; His very Life is eternal changelessness.

The expression of this truth to the mind and

thought of men was rather the task of Greek philosophers than of Hebrew prophets. But the whole religion of ancient Israel is based upon it. The Name by which God reveals Himself to Moses—"I am that I am"—expresses it, while also signifying His manifold revelation of Himself to His people. But apart from utterances so explicit we find from the beginning of the Bible to the end that this changelessness of God is everywhere implied. The covenant made with Noah is "an everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." The generations come and go, but God is unalterably the same. We have the same implication in the Second Commandment.

But it is, as we should expect, by the Prophets and Psalmists that the spiritual value of the truth of God's eternity is most strongly emphasised. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," are words introducing one of the noblest oracles of the Second Isaiah. But we find no nobler expression of it than in the 90th Psalm: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the

earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Or we may quote the words which are cited by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews from the 102nd Psalm: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou continuest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a mantle shalt thou roll them up, as a garment, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

In this contrast between our life, which "creeps in its petty pace from day to day," and the Eternal God, in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday, we have the root fact of religion. It is the source of humility; for what is the greatest of man's achievements in presence of that immutable perfection? It is the source of assurance; for what is the worst of perils in presence of that unalterable glory? All that is mine disappears as I contemplate God's everlasting power and divinity. For "all flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the

field ; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." What is not mine but God's, the cause of His righteousness, the beauty of His truth, the depth of His love—these things become more glorious in that same contemplation ; for though " the grass withereth and the flower fadeth," yet " the word of our God shall stand for ever." Men perish, but God endures.

As God led His people to the ever deeper knowledge of His unchanging Nature, this was among the first truths that He impressed upon them, even as it is among the first that we learn through our experience in worship. But along with it and closely interwoven with it was the truth of His holiness. He is unchanging because He is already and always perfect. The littleness of transitory man before the eternal God is emphasised by the meanness of selfish and greedy man before the God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, in whose sight the very heavens are not clean.

In Jewish worship this was expressed by the awful seclusion of the Holy of Holies. That space where no image might be set up, was veiled from the eyes of men and only entered

once a year on the Day of Atonement by the High Priest alone, who first passed through a solemn purification. So unapproachable was the Holy God. And here once more we find an ineradicable element of our own experience in worship. It is certainly a mistake to try to create a sense of sin in those who have as yet no realisation of God, but it is certainly an inevitable result of any realisation of God that a sense of sin takes possession of the soul. The first result of the vision of God must always be to throw us on our knees in shame for our own unworthiness. We cannot know God and still be self-complacent.

Men perish, but God endures: God is holy, but men are sinful. In those two contrasts spiritual religion has its birth. It was the supreme function of the revelation to ancient Israel to press those contrasts to the very uttermost. There are other truths beside these, some plainly taught and some obscurely intimated or felt after. But these two contrasts between God and men are the central thought of the Old Testament Scriptures, and they could not be more sharply set. "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. . . .

we bring our years to an end as a tale that is told." "What is man, that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, He putteth no trust in His holy ones; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much less one that is abominable and corrupt, a man that drinketh iniquity like water?" God reveals Himself to man; God has even entered the field of history and taken action for the deliverance of His people. There are bonds of gratitude from man to God, and a yearning love of God to man. But fellowship, communion of heart and will and nature? No; that is for ever impossible. "God is in heaven and thou upon earth." There is no fellowship of the perishing with the eternal, of the base with the holy. There is no fellowship of man with God.

"Our fellowship is with the Father." S. John makes his declaration with the whole doctrine of the Old Testament behind him. He has not come to this great conviction by any easy way such as many a Greek might have trod, for whom there was no vast gulf between human and divine to be bridged.

God for the Christian evangelists and prophets is the infinitely exalted God of Moses and Isaiah and Ezekiel; man is the poor transient sinful being who consumes away in God's displeasure. The gulf is there, and by man it cannot be bridged. But the bridge has been built. "Our fellowship is with the Father." We are called to be "partakers of the Divine Nature." But we miss the revolutionary power of this declaration if we think of this fellowship as easy and natural, whether from God's side or from ours. From our side it is not easy or natural; it is impossible. From God's side it is natural indeed but not easy; it is accomplished through the Cross.

A great deal of modern religious thought prides itself upon its sure grasp of the doctrine of the Father's love. It deprecates all language of anxious approach or prostrate submission; the loving Father will not desire such an attitude in His children. But the truth of the Father's love becomes a dangerous error if it is forgotten who and what the heavenly Father is; it quickly degenerates into the "good fellow" of Fitzgerald's "Omar": "He's a good fellow and 'twill

all be well." Our fellowship is with "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Our fellowship with Him may be intimate, but it cannot be familiar; it may be affectionate, but it cannot be casual. The fear of God of which the Old Testament Scriptures are full, the sense of littleness and worthlessness before God, never ceases. Any fear which consists in dread of punishment is cast out by perfect love; but not the sense of our insignificance and meanness. Therefore also, even when all terror is banished by love, our freedom before God is a conscious boldness. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place." "If our heart condemn us not we have boldness towards God." Some moderns talk as though there were no need of boldness in approaching the Most High God. Probably their language is misleading; but if not, we are driven to the conclusion that they have very imperfectly understood "Him with Whom we have to do."

God is Love; that is the supreme Christian mystery. But it is only a supreme mystery because God is first known as eternal, holy,

and almighty. He who is already known as eternal, holy, and almighty is also known to us as Love. This is the good news which apostles proclaim and which Christ died and rose again to vindicate. "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in time of need."

How shall we rightly approach the eternal God so as to find the repose and strength that are in His eternity? Chiefly by dwelling in thought upon His unvarying holiness. To those who do not also know His love, this is crushing as well as uplifting. But we know that the holy God has sought us in our sin and suffered all our sin could do to draw us out of that sin to Himself. To us, therefore, the holiness of God is uplifting only. Let us come to Him to gaze and to enjoy. Our tendency is always to bombard Him with petitions. We scarcely speak to Him in language of our own except to ask for something. We will not let our very worship lift us above the chances and changes of this fleeting world to the realm of eternal holiness. We think of our desires, our needs, our anxieties, or of the

evils that beset the world and the problems that perplex our minds. That is right in its place. But let us take care to give much of our time in prayer to fixing our thoughts on God as He is in Himself. In the public services of the Church, do not fear wandering thoughts, provided that they wander upwards. The reader may be praying for Parliament or for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth. It is well to join in the actual petitions; but we need not check our minds at such times if they soar towards the contemplation of God Himself while Parliament and Church pass out of our thoughts. It is the other movement of thought that must be checked, the movement away from God and petition to the daily concerns of secular life or the satisfaction of personal desires.

Above all, at the Holy Communion let us not only seek blessings, but rise on the wings of worship to the throne of the eternal God. It is a thousand pities that our reformers put the Prayer of Humble Access where they did. No doubt it expresses the humiliation which must follow on the vision of God to which we

are summoned in the *Sanctus*; but it cuts short the moment of exultation and brings us to the Act of Consecration in the mood of suppliants rather than in exultant adoration of our Holy Father, the Almighty and Everlasting God. But there the great words are; let us take care to mean them with profound intention and revel in their praise. Let us rise again to the sublimity of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Most of our thanksgivings are for mercies bestowed on us; but here is a thanksgiving with no thought of ourselves at all: "We give thanks to thee for thy great glory."

"Our fellowship is with the Father"; from communion with the eternal God we draw the strength to change this temporal world. The man who will do most to move the world is not he who concentrates all his attention upon the needs of the world, and dedicates all his energy to reforming labours. The man who will do most to move the world is he who truly dwells with God; for through him there will operate in the world the resources of omnipotence. He will not be weary nor stumble, for he has sources of perpetual

refreshment and his feet are set firm upon the rock.

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations"; "we who are fatigued by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may repose upon Thy eternal changelessness."

VI

ALL SAINTS' DAY

(Westminster Abbey, *November 1st*, 1919.)

"God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."—Eph. II. 4–6.

"Therefore with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name."

The Communion or Fellowship of the Saints is a fact which cannot be doubted by anyone who has pondered the change which Christ our Saviour has accomplished in us. However we may express it, the kernel of Christian experience is what S. Paul expresses by his repeated phrase "In Christ." To problem after problem he applies the same solution. We are in Christ; He has taken possession of us so completely that whatever is true of Him is

true of us also. Has He suffered the death-penalty due to sin ? Then so have we. Has He risen from that death to life indissoluble ? Then so have we. Is He enthroned in the heavenly sphere ? Then so are we. We do not have to win our ascent from earth to heaven ; it has been won for us. Our citizenship is in heaven—now. Our part is not to find the way there, but being there to live worthily of our station.

It is " in Christ " that we have fellowship or Communion with all the Saints of God. For such fellowship, at least in a limited form of it, almost all men crave. The desire for immortality does not chiefly spring from a longing for our own individual continuance ; it springs rather from a desire to be assured that the friends who are gone from us are not lost irrevocably, and that one day the old intercourse will be renewed. It is this desire which spiritualism tries to satisfy in one way and which Christianity satisfies in another. The Communion or Fellowship of Saints is the balm for aching hearts.

This is no time or place for discussing the claims of spiritualism to prove the continued

existence and life of the departed, or to establish communication with spirits in the other world. But it is worth while for Christians to mark carefully the different methods by which contemporary spiritualism and historic revelation seek to afford the same assurance. Spiritualism offers direct communication with the departed apart from any reference to the moral and spiritual attainment either of the departed soul or of the person in this world who seeks such converse. Wherever we may stand, spiritualism tends to bring the departed back to us. The divine method was the exact reverse of this. Through long centuries of spiritual growth Israel was left without a glimmer of hope in any life beyond death that was more than bare existence. The way to the hope of immortality lay through the deepening appreciation of God in His eternity, His righteousness, His love.

We can see why it should be so. The salvation that we need is delivery from self-centredness. To be assured of everlasting life while still in a self-centred state may only stereotype our evil frame of mind. If a man is self-centred, it may be very wholesome

for him to be confronted with the fact that the only certain thing about his life is its inevitable end, after which the merry world will wag very much as if he had never existed at all. Such a reflection may be very healing to self-importance. Once a man who was dying sent for a priest in great distress. "What troubles you?" said the priest. "I am dying," said the man; "and I have wasted my life." "Oh!" said the priest, "is that all? Take comfort then, for it cannot matter much. There are forty million other lives in Great Britain alone."

Now the desire for renewed intercourse with those whom we have loved and lost, while far nobler than a mere longing for our own continuance, is still self-centred. It is still a desire for our own satisfaction. The aim of the Divine education of mankind is to train men away from self till they centre their lives on God, because that alone is their true welfare. It is the old paradox. You cannot have salvation as long as you want it. Only when God has so drawn you into the embrace of His love and into obedience to His will that in devotion to Him you cease to care about

yourself, can your self be saved. Therefore before the hope of immortality was kindled in men's hearts, the knowledge of God was given, so that those hearts should first of all go out to Him. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless until they find rest in Thee." That remains true even though we have the assurance of our own immortality and of that of our friends. Such assurance, apart from the knowledge of God, may lull us with a false security and be a positive peril to our spiritual health.

As long as we are concerned with our own feelings and desires and purposes—be they never so self-abnegating and generous—we are shut out from true fellowship. For there is a very deadly form of selfishness that haunts self-sacrifice, and many virtuous people are utterly without good-fellowship. It is when we cease to think about our desires or feelings or experiences, and give ourselves wholly to the object before us, that we find fellowship. Bring together two people of different temperaments and set them to understand each other—the result is probably a quarrel. Bring them together to work out a practical problem as

colleagues, or to face pain and death as comrades—at once there is fellowship between them. But only one object is lofty and great enough to unite in fellowship all men of all types: it is the supreme Reality which we call God.

Christianity confronts mankind with God: God the Creator of all that is; God living among men a human life, dying under man's condemnation and rising from the death that could not hold Him; God answering from within the self-enfolded heart of man to His own call from Heaven and from the Cross. It teaches us to pray as those who are so absorbed in the vision of God that their first desire is for the hallowing of His Name, the coming of His Kingdom, the doing of His Will, on earth as truly as in heaven. God for the Christian is the centre of everything. He is both foreground and background of every picture. He is the one sure reality, the one supreme concern. And "He has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This is the one all-pervading theme of the Christian faith. There is very little in the

New Testament about the life after death. It is just an inevitable implication of the doctrine of God. If God is what Christ reveals, He will not let His children perish. He is a God of Love; and Love is of individuals, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for example. "He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

And just as immortality springs to light through the Gospel of God, so it is immediately known to be a fellowship. For those who are eternal through their fellowship with God are therein united in fellowship with one another. "In Christ" we know our own eternity; "in Christ" we find ourselves united in mutual fellowship. It is not only on some remote occasion when the world's history comes to be wound up, it is now whenever the Saviour meets the souls He has redeemed that them also that are asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

Our fellowship with the blessed dead is therefore to be won, not by their descent to us, but by our ascent to them, as in the Eucharist we lift up our hearts to the Lord and forthwith it is with Angels and Archangels and with all

the company of Heaven that we laud and magnify God's glorious Name. It is in worship and in work that we are one with them. They with us are members of the one great fellowship, the Fellowship or Communion of Saints. The hallowing of God's Name, the coming of His Kingdom, the doing of His will, are still their chief concern ; as in prayer and effort we labour for these things we are helping to accomplish what is the chief desire of their hearts.

But we want to come nearer to them than that if we can ; and still it must be by prayer. Let us pray for those whom we know and love who have passed on to the other life. The objection to prayers for the dead rests on two assumptions, one of them unfounded and the other definitely false. The first is the assumption that at death all is irrevocably settled ; whatever be the state of the soul at that moment, in that state it must unalterably remain. Neither in revelation nor in reason is there a shred of evidence for this once-prevalent delusion. We cannot doubt that growth in grace and power and love continues after death. The other assumption which

leads men to object to prayers for the dead is the belief that we should only pray for such blessings as we fear may not be granted unless we pray for them. But this is flatly contradictory to the teaching of Christ. We are to pray for all good things because it is our Father's will to give them, and we should acknowledge that we receive all good things at His hand. We do not pray for them because God will otherwise neglect them. We pray for them because we know He loves and cares for them, and we claim the privilege of uniting our love for them with God's.

But do not be content to pray for them. Let us also ask them to pray for us. In such prayers while they lived on earth they both displayed and consecrated their love towards us. Doubtless that ministry of love continues: but let us seek it, ask for it, claim it. It is in the mutual service of prayer, our prayer for them and theirs for us, that we come closest to them. For our fellowship with them is "in Christ," and we find them when we seek them in His Name.

We claim the station Christ has won for us. With Him we are conquerors of death and

citizens of the eternal world. We seek the saints and our own departed friends in His presence; we are near them when we keep close to Him. He is the Way both to the Father and to the Father's home where His children are gathered.

VII

THE COMFORTER

(Westminster Abbey, *May 2nd*, 1920.)

"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you."—S. John xvi. 7.

"It is expedient for you that I go away." How could that be true? What blessing can be conceived that is for a moment comparable to the companionship of the incarnate Son of God, the companionship of Jesus? That He should prepare His disciples for His departure, if indeed He must depart, would be natural and intelligible. But how can it be good for them that He should go?

What is the aim of every true educator? It is not to give to his pupils such stimulus and support as will make them dependent upon him at every turn; rather it is to help

them in the development of their own capacities in such a way that they may learn to be independent of him. They will always be his debtors; but they will owe him most just in the degree that he avoids imposing his own personality upon them, and allows them to absorb what they can, guiding, steadying, restraining, quickening, but never imposing. The greatness of Socrates as a teacher may be gauged by the fact that at least three totally divergent schools of philosophy claimed him as their founder and chief inspiration. The greatest teachers do not implant in their pupils a body of beliefs or a fixed habit of mind; they evoke a spirit which is identical in all so far as it is of loyalty and devotion, but is different in each so far as it expresses itself in activities or methods.

The process of evoking this spirit is always the same. Educational theories vary from age to age; the curriculum of schools may be indefinitely altered; but the fundamental educational process remains always unaffected. It is the development of the less mature mind through intercourse with the more mature mind and with the deposit of other minds in

the form of social traditions and conventions. When a boy goes to school he finds himself at once entangled in a net-work of such traditions; some of them he can at once see to be good; some are good, though at first he does not see their value; some are empty forms; some, probably, are more or less bad. All these traditions are the work, usually the unconscious work, of other minds like his own as they passed through the school. In them he is in contact indirectly with those other minds. In the older boys, and still more in the masters, he meets directly with minds more mature than his own. And there may be some one personality who pervades the whole place, some great figure, either of past or present, whose influence seems to dominate all other influences, both strengthening some and moderating others. By sharing that life and holding intercourse, direct or indirect, with all the minds that constitute it, the boy is educated. He receives and assimilates according to his own capacities, and grows to the fulfilment of his own destiny. This ideal may be missed in a great variety of ways, but it remains the normal course of education.

Our spiritual growth follows the same principles. We live among people who have certain standards of life and conduct; these are the product or deposit of countless souls in the generations gone by. By those standards our lives are shaped; by those standards to a very great extent our consciences are formed. But we are brought up also in the Church which is the school of Christ; there, too, we find traditional beliefs and requirements which represent, in a sort of summary, the experience of Christ's pupils. We meet with souls who have developed far towards perfect discipleship, and by our intercourse with them are led to further stages of our own development. Above all, this school of Christ is dominated by the Person of Christ Himself; all things are referred to Him as the supreme arbiter; and even when corruption sets in, as it is likely to do from time to time in any society composed of human beings, it is by the standard of Christ's teaching and by His living power that reformation is achieved.

The Spirit which pervades the Church is the Divine Spirit, God the Holy Ghost. There

we shall chiefly find Him, because He works in His greatest power on them who know the full revelation of God in Christ. But the Divine Word which was uttered in the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus is not something alien from all the world besides. "All things were made by Him, and apart from Him was not anything made." The Light of the world shone forth in Him in all its splendour; but it did not then shine for the first or only time; it has always shone in all men's hearts; it is "The Light that lighteneth every man." So the Church is not something alien from the world, but is, or should be, the concentrated expression of what the world is striving to be, can be, and, by the Church's work within it, shall be. So it is with each individual; the Comforter, whom Christ sends to us from the Father to strengthen us for His service, is not merely some person or power outside us and distinct from us, but is the perfection of that same zeal and energy for righteousness which in some measure is already in our souls. For God made man in His own image; and the element within us whereby we are akin to God is also

that which is most truly and fundamentally ourselves.

Education proceeds, we said, by the intercourse of the less mature mind with the more mature ; it is limited by the learner's capacity to assimilate ; this capacity depends mainly on the sympathy and community of interest which bind together teacher and pupil. We can only become what we already potentially are. The acorn may never become a tree at all ; circumstances determine that ; but if it does become a tree, it is bound to become an oak, and no manipulation of environment can train it to be an elm. So we can only respond to the fuller development of our own nature ; we cannot imitate with any advantage a manner of life that is different from that which expresses our own nature. Like answers to like.

Now it was inevitable that the manifestation of God in the flesh should take place at a particular time and in a particular place. And though our Lord took no part in purely temporary or local movements, yet the setting of His life was that of Palestine in the first century of our era. So long as He was

present with His disciples in bodily form, He was subject to all the limitations of time and space. Those limitations would have become an ever-increasing barrier to the diffusion of His influence. It was expedient that He should go away, in order that the Spirit, perfectly manifested once for all in Him, should energise in perfect freedom from all limitations both upon and within the hearts of all men through the entire world.

The Greek word translated Comforter means rather Advocate. The Holy Spirit is one whom we can call to our aid in difficulty or trouble. And even the English word Comforter has changed its meaning and through association with what we now call comfort has come to suggest soothing qualities of consolation. Musicians have accepted and encouraged this interpretation by setting the phrases where this word occurs to soft and soothing music. But when the Authorised Version of the Bible was made, the word Comforter meant chiefly Encourager and Strengthener; it means one who sustains our strength and courage by being Himself brave and strong beside us.

Jesus Christ is God incarnate ; therefore His Spirit is the Spirit of God. Because the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God, that Spirit meets the need of every man made in the image of God. Each has his own life to live, his own part of the pattern to fill in. No other man can be to any man the perfect teacher. But God designs the pattern, and His help is just what each man needs. Each can find in Him the satisfaction of his own deepest desire, the fulfilment of his own highest hope ; and what he finds is the perfect completion of just his own life and being. The kinship of what is deepest in our souls with the Spirit in the world and in the Church, Who is the Spirit of Jesus, is what gives us the ground of our endless hope ; for that kinship persists through all our sins and through all our futilities.

So the boy-poet, Charles Sorley — whose death was one of the greatest losses brought upon us by the war—had already learnt to understand :—

> From morn till midnight, all day through,
> I laugh and play as others do,
> I sin and chatter, just the same
> As others, with a different name.

And all year long upon the stage
I dance and tumble and do rage
So vehemently, I scarcely see
The inner and eternal me.

I have a temple I do not
Visit, a heart I have forgot,
A self that I have never met,
A secret shrine—and yet, and yet,

This sanctuary of my soul
Unwitting I keep white and whole,
Unlatched and lit, if Thou should'st care
To enter or to tarry there.

With parted lips and outstretched hands,
And listening ears Thy servant stands,
Call Thou early, call Thou late,
To Thy great service dedicate.

Deep in every one of us is that spark of the divine fire, which is scarcely ever—perhaps never—extinguished in this earthly life. Through all our sins and all our frivolities it still burns on. Even if we have spent our days in selfish pleasures and our years in worldly ambitions, the deepest springs of our life are undefiled; our truest self is still to God's great service dedicate. For the deepest and truest self in every one of us, as many a mystic has learnt, is God the Holy Ghost Himself within us, helping the infirmities of our prayers with groanings that cannot be uttered,

and always making for us the perfect intercession which is according to the will of God. God within us is answering to God without us and above us, to God as He issues His law from heaven, to God as He teaches His children through the human lips of Jesus. Like answers to like ; deep answers to deep ; God makes answer to Himself.

How then shall we seek the aid of the Comforter ? Let me answer the question with another. Do you often pray to God the Holy Ghost ? And if you do, what thought have you of Him to whom you pray ? We pray to the Almighty Father, to whom we and all things owe our being. We pray to God our suffering Saviour, by whose passion we are redeemed. So far our thoughts are definite ; when we turn to the Holy Spirit they are often vague. But our prayers will be enriched and made more potent if we add to them prayers to the Holy Spirit with an understanding of what we do.

Let us then pray to the Mighty Spirit Who guides the processes of natural creation, the courses of the stars, the procession of the seasons, the development of species ; Who

strives ceaselessly in human history to express in and through men that love which is the nature of God Who made them; Who works especially in the Church, the school of Christ's disciples, inspiring, correcting, reforming, supplying; Who was given without measure to Jesus of Nazareth, so that in Him we see what the Spirit would make of us: and as we pray let us remember that this Mighty Spirit dwells within ourselves, soul of our souls, our own truest self, always, despite our chattering and our sinning, "to God's great service dedicate." So when we say, "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire," we are not only calling One to enter us from without; we are calling One forth from within our inmost hearts, that our words may be His utterance and our deeds His actions. Cease not to pray to God in Heaven; cease not to pray to God in Christ; but pray also to the God within your breast, the "Almighty ever-present Deity," to the voice which urges you to right and warns you of wrong, and impresses the austere, imperious claims of beauty or of truth. Pray so, and God within your soul shall answer; you will find His power there

ready to issue forth in words divine which your lips will speak, in godlike actions done through you. You shall learn what S. Paul meant when he said, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." For through all your weakness and meanness there will break the irresistible power of Almighty God—the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

VIII

THE WORK OF THE COMFORTER

(Westminster Abbey, *May 9th*, 1920.)

"He, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me, of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged."—S. John xvi. 8–11.

Our Lord had promised that when He withdrew His physical presence from the disciples He would return in the Person of the Comforter, the Spirit whom they would find in the Church, that is, in the society and fellowship of His disciples, and also, each according to his measure, in their own souls. He immediately went on to describe the effect upon the world that would be produced by this Spirit at work in the Church; the world would be proved wrong in respect of the three main elements of human religion—sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through

the manifest work of the Spirit in the Church the world would be brought to a realisation of its sin in refusing to believe in Christ; to an acknowledgment of His righteousness as established by His return to the Father; to a recognition that in the sentence of condemnation which it pronounced against Christ it was judging itself.

But the promise goes farther than this. Not only will the world be forced to acknowledge its own sin, Christ's righteousness, and the judgment which it has brought on itself, it will be proved wrong in its very conception of what sin, righteousness, and judgment really are: "He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement." And to be wrong about these is to be wrong about what it is most important to know.

How does the world conceive of sin? The ordinary man seems to think of it as consisting in certain acts which are contrary either to some law of Church or State, or else to the dictates of his own conscience. Indeed there are some who declare that so long as a man follows his own conscience he cannot be

committing sin. Certainly every man should follow his conscience ; but that is not the whole of duty. Still more urgently important is the duty of enlightening conscience itself. For the greatest crimes in history have been performed under the direction of conscience. Our Lord told His disciples to be ready for the time when whosoever killed them would think he was doing service to God. A sin committed against the light is more wicked than another ; the man who does it is more guilty. But sin is something much wider and deeper than guilt. Everything which is other than God would have it be is sin. "All have sinned," says S. Paul, "and come short of the glory of God." It is not enough that we should be as good as the people about us expect ; nothing is enough except to be as good as God expects. And we know His standard. "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." In other words, we are sinners if we are not as good as God. There is no chance of our setting ourselves that standard, to say nothing of attaining it, if we are left to our own resources.

The proof that the world has been wrong about sin is to be found in its failure to believe in Christ. Here again many are inclined to protest. "A man cannot help his beliefs," they say; "he is responsible for acting up to them, but he is not answerable for what does or does not seem to him to be true." The superficial accuracy of such a statement makes it very dangerous. When a proposition is made to a man, he exercises his judgment to the best of his ability, and arrives at the conclusion either that the proposition is true or that it is false. What more can he do? At that moment he can do nothing more. But when it is said that he exercises his judgment to the best of his ability, the question must be asked whether his ability is as great as careful discipline could make it. If not, his lack of power to judge is a sin for which he is responsible. The principle is both clearer and more important when we pass to ideals. The ideal is presented, and the man considers whether or not it should be adopted. His answer will largely depend on his character. He may give the best and truest answer of which at that moment he is capable;

but if he has allowed himself to settle down to a selfish outlook or to materialist standards, this will affect his judgment, and his perfectly honest rejection of the ideal will be sin. So S. Paul always saw the Cross of Christ as a touchstone by which character is tested. If men could see in perfect self-sacrifice the power and wisdom of God, that proved that they were of the elect; if the claim that it represented this seemed to them scandalous or foolish, that stamped them as being on the road to perdition. "The word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God." "We preach a Messiah on a cross, to Jews a scandal and to Gentiles an absurdity, but just to those who are called a Messiah who is God's power and God's wisdom."

The root of sin, then, lies behind and beyond all actions. It is in the very fibre of the character that determines the actions. A man may follow the light that is in him; but the light that is in him may itself be darkness.

For such sin there is only one prevention

or cure. It is to keep the soul steadily exposed to the influences which purify and ennoble. We shall find them in the world in all associations of men for noble causes; and we can tell which groups or associations are those in which the Spirit is at work by watching to see whether the fruits of the Spirit appear. Wherever we find love and joy and peace, there we know that the Holy Spirit is at work. We find His influence in the Church among those who are seeking to live closer to Christ and to inspire the life of men with His principles. We find that same influence most of all in the Lord Himself. The most searching question we can put to ourselves is the test question, "Do we believe in Him?" It is not the question whether we believe various theological propositions concerning Him, important as that question is in its place. But do we believe in Him? Do we put our trust in Him in any practical sense? Are we staking our lives on His truth and love?

As the Spirit will drive us back from outward conduct to our inward state in respect of sin, so is it with the corresponding term

Righteousness. Here, too, men usually adopt an external standard. If they are doing with reasonable care the thing that they are paid to do, they are inclined to think that they have fulfilled all obligations. If in addition they are regular in church attendance and subscribe to a missionary society, they resent any further demands. A man who acts so is universally respected; the world pronounces him righteous. But the world is only half right. When the Life of perfect righteousness was lived before it, the world was unconvinced; at last the world cut short that Life by a felon's death. Yet that humiliating end, as the world thought it, was itself the union of the Sufferer with the Father, because in it His love was made perfect. The Crucifixion was a rejection and a criminal execution on the world's part; but to Him who was rejected it was the return of the Son to the Father. The persistence in the disciples of the movement initiated by Christ, despite the fact that their Leader was no longer visibly among them, was proof to the world that this Life of sacrifice, and not the Life of comfortable respectability, is the

real righteousness. "He will convict the world in respect of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye see me no more."

It is still the same. The world admires and approves its successful and honourable men. That is right enough. But real sacrifice for higher than material or national causes it regards with something like alarm. Let us ask ourselves what our attitude would be if one of our best friends consulted us about his action when he was contemplating the abandonment of some lucrative profession to advance a philanthropic cause, or to work as a Missionary among ignorant tribes, or to pursue some scientific research which no one would endow. Is not our inclination at such times always to advise the comfortable course, and to shake our heads, even while we admire, if he determines to take the more heroic course? We do not believe in self-sacrifice enough to recommend it to our friends, even when we might follow it ourselves. We are not at home among the principles of Christ.

If our conception of sin and of righteousness needs to be deepened, quite equally is this true of our thought of judgment. Men have

persisted in thinking of the Divine Judgment as being the infliction upon them by an arbitrary despot of penalties not growing out of their crimes but specially imposed. So we are told that because, rightly or wrongly, many men have ceased to believe in the reality of Hell, they find in their thought of a future life no constraining motive of conduct. If so, the motive which had been supplied by the thought of a future life cannot have been remarkably Christian. We do not show discipleship to Christ when we lay plans for securing an eternity of self-centred enjoyment. Fear of punishment and hope of reward are always selfish emotions, unless the reward we hope for is the joy of fellowship with one whom we love and the punishment we fear is just exclusion from that fellowship.

The world thought that it was judging Christ when Caiaphas rent his clothes and the people shouted, "He is worthy of death," and Pilate gave sentence that what they asked for should be done. But we know that it was they, not He, upon whom judgment was then pronounced. History has vindicated His claim that in rejecting Him the Prince of this

world was already judged, and has therein also convicted the world in respect of judgment.

In requiring such a revision of our conception of what judgment is, the Spirit drives us back upon the enquiry, What is our motive in life and even in discipleship? If our success or failure is to be gauged by the measure of happiness that is granted to us, then we are fundamentally at fault in our conception of what judgment is; we are only right if we can realise that fellowship with Christ is itself so blessed a thing that all consideration of rewards for following Him is intolerably out of place.

Last week I urged that we should seek more than most of us do the especial aid of God the Holy Ghost, the Comforter Whom Christ promised to send, the Spirit who moves in all the processes of creation, Whom we find especially in the Church, and Who constantly dwells in our own souls, the truest self in every one of us. But that course has its dangers. There are movements in the world, in the Church, and certainly in the depths of our souls, which spring from any source rather

than God's Holy Spirit. We are learning to think of God as Life, and in all life to find the activity of God. But this will mislead as often as it will help unless we have some means of assuring ourselves that the activities we witness, or the impulses of which we become aware, are truly of God. And we shall find this partly in watching how far we are being led back from the outer world of action to the inner world of motive, from the justice that seeks an equal satisfaction of competing claims to the love that lifts us above the sphere of rivalries, from the prudence which reckons the cost which it is worth while to pay for a reward in the same kind to the devotion which rejoices that it is counted worthy to suffer for its Lord.

The Christian religion, which recognises God in the processes of Nature and the aspirations of the soul, also finds the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. He is the express image of the Person of the Father; He is also the living portrait of the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, is most high in the glory of God the Father. Through His revelation of the Father's love

the Spirit, Who is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, obtains the fulness of His power.

We can then add something to the thought and hope with which we pray to the indwelling Spirit, to the God within the breast. As we so pray, we shall hope and believe that God will speak and act through us. We shall call forth from the depths of our own being His illimitable resources for the service we would render to the Father. But He who from within ourselves makes answer to that prayer is the Spirit who is revealed in Christ. He will not of necessity carry us to easy triumphs and gratifying successes. He may take us through loneliness, desertion by our friends, apparent desertion even by God. He may drive us into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He may carry us, not to the Mount of Transfiguration, but to the Garden of Gethsemane and the hill that is called the Place of a Skull. So when we pray, "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire," we must know what we are about. We cannot call on the powers of the "Creator Spirit, by Whose aid The world's foundations first were laid" in order to use omnipotence for the supply of

our futile pleasures, or the success of our futile plans. If we invoke Him, we must be ready for the glorious pain of being caught by His power out of our petty orbit into the eternal purposes of the Almighty, in Whose onward sweep our lives are as a speck of dust. The soul that is filled with the Spirit must have become purged of all pride or love of ease; but that soul has also found the only real dignity, the only lasting joy. Come, then, Great Spirit, come.

IX

THE EXALTED CHRIST AND THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

(Westminster Abbey, *May* 16*th* 1920.)

"They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, the Holy Ghost coming upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses."—Acts i. 6–8.

"Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" What a tedious and tiresome question! The Lord had lived before men and among His disciples the very Life of God; He had spoken as never man spake; He had died and had given them at the Last Supper the interpretation of His death as the perfect sacrifice whereby the new covenant between God and Man was inaugurated; He had broken the bonds of death and visibly

appeared again among His friends; and what they want to know is whether their petty principality on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean is to recover its political independence. How tedious! How exasperatingly unperceptive!

Yet we are bound to remember what that political independence meant for the devout Israelite; it meant freedom to exhibit before the world the blessings that come to a nation which freely orders its life according to the law of God. Israel was Church as much as nation, and its spiritual inheritance was of supreme dignity: "Whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the patriarchs, and of whom is the Messiah as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever." The subjection of this people to the yoke of a foreign empire seemed to prohibit the free expression of a national obedience to God. Israel alone could show any such thing to the world and Israel was prevented. Would the risen Christ create the opportunity?

He does not rebuke the question; He does

not give a negative answer. He sets it aside as irrelevant. The course of human history is in the hands of the Father. The time when the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdom of our God and of His Christ will surely come; but when it will come is no concern of men. The disciples receive no satisfaction for their curiosity; but instead they receive a promise and a charge. They receive the promise of power through the coming of the Holy Spirit; they receive the charge to bear witness to Christ.

The Ascension of Christ is His liberation from all restrictions of time and space. It does not represent His removal from the earth, but His constant presence everywhere on earth.

During His earthly ministry He could only be in one place at a time. If He was in Jerusalem He was not in Capernaum; if He was in Capernaum He was not in Jerusalem. But now He is united with God, He is present wherever God is present; and that is everywhere. Because He is in Heaven, He is everywhere on earth; because He is ascended, He is here now. In the Person of the Holy

Spirit He dwells in His Church, and issues forth from the deepest depths of the souls of His disciples, to bear witness to His sovereignty.

The Ascended Christ is the source of the Holy Spirit as we know Him. Christ has departed from the physical companionship of men; but He has not left us comfortless; He has sent the comforter, the Spirit of Truth and Love. We have considered how we may seek the aid of the Comforter; we have reminded ourselves that He is the Spirit perfectly manifested in Christ and that only for the doing of Christ's work can we enjoy His help. To-day we dwell on the truth that only as a result of the perfection of Christ's union with the Father could the Holy Spirit, as we know Him, come into the world. So S. John says quite plainly at a point in the middle of our Lord's ministry, "There was not yet Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Yet we say of the Holy Spirit that He spake by the prophets, and no one limits this in his mind to the order of prophets in the early Christian Church. Assuredly the work

of the Holy Spirit in the world did not begin after the Ascension of our Lord. But it is true and vitally important that only then, and only in the Christian Church, is the power of the Spirit to be found in all its fulness. For what, after all, is that power? It is not chiefly revealed in the laws of Nature by which the universe is maintained in one stupendous system; nor chiefly in the reactions whereby, under the general order of the world, self-seeking procures its own downfall. In such eternal ordinances we do indeed see the work of the Holy Ghost; but it is only because we have a knowledge of Him altogether transcending those spheres that we are able in the ordering of the world to trace the activity of no dead fate but of a living Person. The power of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us chiefly in the call of God to our souls; in the voice of conscience, pointing our duty; in the yearning for a fulness of life that is now beyond our reach; in the imperious claim that truth and beauty make upon the student and the artist; in the realisation of fellowship with the Eternal to which we have sometimes risen in prayer and meditation and wor-

ship and communion ; in the strength beyond our own that has been given us in difficulty or trouble ; in the growth and purification of character as we have persevered in duty and discipleship. To put it shortly, our experience of the Spirit is experience of a personal relationship.

All the various religions of mankind rest upon some apprehension of such a relationship. In the Old Testament writers we witness the steady deepening of just such an apprehension. The dealings of God with His people supplied the basis and background of the faith of Israel and its prophets. There is a clear consciousness of a relation between the whole nation and its God ; and this differs vitally from the relation, at first sight similar, that existed between other nations and their supposed deities. For it was a moral, not a natural, relation. With other Semitic tribes this had not been so. Moab was as necessary to Chemosh as Chemosh was to Moab ; his greatness consisted in the greatness of his people. But Jehovah was bound to Israel by moral ties alone ; He chose Israel of His own free will. The Lord and His people

were linked together not by natural affinities but by the moral link of a covenant. His infinite exaltation left Him always far above the vicissitudes that might befall the Israelites. He could indeed win further glory by carrying them to greatness; but their failure and infidelity left His transcendence unimpaired.

On the background of that national faith, and out of it as from a goodly soil, sprang the faith of the prophets. With them at least the relationship with a personal God becomes an individual experience. No one can read the sixth chapter of Isaiah or the first of Jeremiah without a conviction that here we have a record of direct experience. Isaiah's realisation of the glory of God and his sudden sense of unworthiness in that Holy Presence—an unworthiness which is cancelled by the Divine purging and the Divine mission; Jeremiah's conviction of personal incompetence and Divinely-given strength—these are not fictions but realities. The same is true of Amos to whom the divine call came on the open hill-sides of Judea, and who repudiates the title of a prophet because it suggests something too deliberate and professional.

It is true of the whole line from Elijah to Malachi, though there are many undulations.

In the Psalmists the individual relationship to God becomes deeper and more intimate, and to this day there are no phrases to express this central heart of personal religion more beautifully adequate than some passages from the Psalms.

Yet in all this record there is a curious incompleteness, and that in two especial ways. First we are struck and almost shocked by the alternations of far lower conceptions with the loftiest flights of inspiration. We who read, or ought to read, the Scriptures of the Old Testament with eyes illuminated by the splendour of God's perfect self-manifestation in Christ, are startled to find side by side with words that seem to express the religion of the Gospel other words that attribute to God the vindictive passions of an Oriental despot, and commands which we know cannot represent His will. In all inspired men the man remains as well as the inspiration.

The gold of divine truth is mingled with much human alloy. Sometimes in a single short Psalm we find tenderness and ferocity

combined without any sense of incongruity, as in the 137th, which opens with the exquisitely beautiful lamentation of the exiles for the Sion they had left behind and ends with the hideous imprecation against Babylon : " Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock." We know that in such an utterance the writer is far from fellowship with the Divine Love.

Once more, with all the sense of dependence upon God and of fellowship with Him, there is a failure to enter into the reality of His Love. This is perhaps plainest in Ezekiel, who, for all his tenderness, will never dare to suggest that the Almighty and Eternal has any such concern for His people as the word love implies ; it is not for their sake but for the glory of His own Name that He blesses them. And even prophets who never state the matter so sharply yet fail to maintain any steady realisation of His love as the constant motive of all God's activity. They hold intercourse with Him, but there is no completeness of fellowship ; for He is as yet but partially known ; and the word of prophecy always contains the note : " Verily

Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." To the end of the Old Testament, "clouds and darkness are round about Him."

Then the light breaks through. In Jesus Christ the glory of the Love of God appears in undimmed splendour. But it does so because it clothes itself in human flesh, acts through human will, utters itself through human thought and suffers with human feeling. Till then man's faith was an answer to a God still largely unknown. This could never be whole-hearted. Man can respond with all His soul only to what stirs His sympathy. Men knew that God was holy, and they worshipped; men knew that He was almighty, and they feared. But that is not an answer of the entire soul. What should make them love?

> See from His head, His hands, His feet,
> Sorrow and love flow mingling down;
> Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

"He loved me; and gave Himself for me." When I really believe that, my devotion becomes complete. Alas that we so seldom

realise what we profess every day! When I really believe this, the Divine Spirit of Love within is released to carry my whole being into perfect devotion to the Love thus shown to me without; God rushes forth to blend with God, and my life becomes an atom in that all-embracing circle of Divine Love, which is the Blessed Trinity.

But my response can only be complete when the revelation of God's love is itself completely given in a form which we completely understand and which therefore calls forth a complete sympathy. That power of God upon and within the soul, which is the Holy Ghost, can only be complete when Jesus has been glorified through the completion of the obedience, which keeps Him without sin through all temptations, and leads to the perfect self-sacrifice and union with the Father. The experience of the Spirit which is allowed to us became possible through the Life, the Death, the Resurrection, the Ascension of Jesus our Lord.

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we

have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

As we come into His presence we shall not ask to know of times or seasons. We shall not be dismayed by wars or rumours of wars, nor speculate on the arrival of a millennium of peace and goodwill, though we shall do our utmost to prepare the way for it. But we shall bear witness to our ascended Lord, through fellowship with whom the Holy Ghost is come upon us with a gift of power that we can utilise for His service if we will. We shall be His witnesses, declaring to men that only from Him comes the Spirit who gives men power to live as Sons of God. And we shall make our own communion with our Lord more constant, more intimate, more affectionate, so that His Spirit may work in us in ever greater power to the accomplishment of His loving purpose for the world.

X

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORLD

(Westminster Abbey, *May 23rd*, 1920.)

"The earth was waste and void . . . and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—Genesis i. 2.

So the physical world once was; so the moral world now is: a vast formlessness gradually being reduced to form and significance by the constant operation of the Divine influence. It was a brilliant anticipation of modern knowledge that led the author of the first chapter of the Bible to present at the outset a picture of the world in a state where not only shape and structure but, apparently, all solidity was lacking. But there is no more than a pleasant curiosity to be satisfied by a comparison of this pic-

torial myth with a scientific treatise. It is enough to note that the Bible is at one with science in picturing the course of the physical creation as a process from formlessness and meaningless fluidity towards form and solidity and significance.

We may trace that process historically in the researches of natural science ; but to-day we will rather think of this work of God the Holy Ghost in shaping the world from the standpoint of man's two great endeavours to enter into its secret, the endeavours of science and of art. The first is the way of knowledge. Consider what the history of any real knowledge is. People sometimes say light-heartedly that our duty is to observe the facts and then make theories to fit them. But that is light-headed as well as light-hearted. Only at the end of the scientific process do we know what the facts really are. Our first observations, however carefully they are taken, are, at the very best, rough summary accounts, given according to the evidence of our somewhat crude sensations. Someone makes a theory to account for these ; then he and others, with that theory in

mind, observe the facts again; with the help of the theory observation is no longer haphazard but deliberate and selective, so that new elements in the facts are observed; these may in turn lead to a modification of the theory. Then the process is repeated. And this goes on until it seems that all the discoverable elements of the subject-matter are known and a theory is formed which links them together in an intelligible coherence. But we have then got something very different from facts and theories as commonly understood. We have probably reached a stage where the facts are atoms or electrons or α-particles, or whatever else we are to regard as the ultimate constitution of matter, things which no one ever saw, and are believed to exist because the theory has led to that belief. Such facts rest on the theory as well as the theory on the facts; the two are become indistinguishable, for they are united in a system of knowledge where all is fact and all is theory. It is at the end of the scientific process, not at its beginning, that we know the facts. To take the obvious instance, we all believe to-day that the earth goes round

the sun; but what we seem to observe is the sun going round the earth.

Then remember what ages of astronomical study were required before that belief, so familiar to us, was reached. In one generation after another men sought the truth, each building on the labour of his forerunners. The truth was not to be found merely by careful looking; it required right thinking. And all the thinking that men can do has only enabled them to penetrate the fringe of that great scheme of perfect truth which is the work of the Supreme Reason, God the Creator Spirit.

We do not sufficiently attend to this stupendous fact. We take for granted the correspondence of our reason with the principles that govern the physical creation. And some think to rob it of its significance by regarding the reason of men as a faculty evolved in the course of centuries for dealing with the facts of our experience and therefore taking a form adapted to such a purpose. But that makes no shadow of difference. The fact is what it is, however it originated. And the fact is that man by the exercise of his reason can

probe the secret of Nature, showing that Nature is controlled by principles akin to the mind of man; in other words nature is fundamentally spiritual.

So we may say that, however far the human mind may advance in scientific research, it will always find that God the Holy Ghost has been there first. He is the archetypal scientist, the Supreme Reason whereby the universe is held together in the perfect unity of intelligible laws.

This impression is deepened when we consider the process by which, under those laws, the creation has come to assume its present form. "All things were in chaos," says Anaxagoras, "until Reason set them in order." "The earth was waste and void," says the author of the first chapter of Genesis; "and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." These ancient writers summarise for us the impression left by modern doctrines. Slowly, with endless adaptations and adjustments, the Spirit has led the creation, always subject to its own intelligible laws, which are its spiritual charter, to the phase we witness; and the process still goes

forward. Human science is but the partial apprehension of the progressively realised plan of the Omniscient. Science finds its perfect counterpart in the truth, and the student of science finds his own ideal in the Spirit of Truth.

Now the scientific mind which studies the world is itself part of the world which it studies. It is the constant recognition of this fact, with its implications, which more than anything else distinguishes the philosophic attitude of mind from the scientific as generally understood. But if it be so, then the impulse to pursue knowledge must be taken as a manifestation of the same Spirit Who guides the course of the world which in that impulse we are impelled to know. The Spirit within us prompts us to seek Himself by study of the works in which He is manifest. God in the soul reaches out to God in Nature. In man's achievement of knowledge God makes answer to Himself.

But the Creator Spirit is not only the perfect scientist. He is also the perfect artist. The world He fashions does not merely hold together by means of intelligible laws. It is

also the supreme miracle of beauty, towards which human art gloriously but never quite successfully aspires. The artist may sometimes claim to improve on Nature; but that can only mean that by selection of interests and narrowing of the field of attention he presents a beauty more apprehensible by us than is the great panorama of the natural creation.

> "For (don't you mark?) we're made so that we love
> First, when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
> And so they are better, painted—better to us
> Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
> God uses us to help each other so
> Lending our minds out."

Our capacities are so limited that we cannot enjoy pure comedy and pure tragedy both at once; we should be confused by the attempt. One element or the other must preponderate, and the less important be kept in strict subordination. But who shall say whether tragedy or comedy is the prevailing note of the animal creation, where we find among birds and beasts the sublimity of heroism in the mother's care and self-sacrifice for her young or the pattern of fidelity in the

devotion of a dog, and where we also find the glorious joke of the ass's bray and the duck's quack and the pelican's bill and the penguin's solemn waddle. The art of Nature is plainly beyond emulation. Will any colourist attempt to surpass the splendour of the sunset? Will any dressmaker compete with the plumage of the raven or of the humming bird? Is any miniature to be compared to the wing of a common blue butterfly? Our most laborious attempts fall short of the lavish prodigality of Nature. Is any drama so dramatic as history itself? Is any even so theatrical?

At this season all the world is clothed in gorgeous raiment. Are any sights on earth more thrilling with loveliness than the carpet of bluebells in a wood or the flashing sheen of buttercups in an open field? And we know that it is God who "so clothes the grass of the field." That golden glory of buttercups is the artistry of God the Holy Ghost. The wind that sways it into rippling laughter is His breath. At the riotous beauty of God's handiwork the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy. For

all of it is His work and in all of it He rejoices. "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all.

As the seasons change and the succeeding glories return, "God renews His ancient rapture."

Two arts the Spirit kept in reserve to bring to their completeness in Man, himself the Spirit's highest accomplishment. The music of Nature, for all its loveliness, is not to be compared with the music of man, whose superiority here is due to his consciousness of his own condition, his power of deliberate choice of expression, and his sense of contrast between his actual and his ideal state. From this same self-consciousness arises the very possibility of literature, the art which man possesses for himself alone. But any contrast between man and Nature is false, for man is part of Nature, and his art is just another impulse of God the Holy Ghost, the Creator-Artist of the world. Here once more God

from within the soul reaches out to God in Nature, and as we appreciate His work we enter into the joy of our Lord. If in all the recurring seasons God renews His ancient rapture, then the poet who rejoices in them rejoices with the joy of God. He hails them as brethren because he and they are alike God's handiwork and the beauty in them and in his soul is the self-expression of one and the self-same Holy Spirit.

> Earth, ocean, air, belovéd brotherhood !
> If our great Mother has imbued my soul
> With aught of natural piety to feel
> Your love, and recompense the boon with mine:
> If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
> With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
> And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;
> If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
> And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
> Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;
> If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
> Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;
> If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
> I consciously have injured, but still loved
> And cherished these my kindred ; then forgive
> This boast, belovéd brethren, and withdraw
> No portion of your wonted favour now.

So Shelley, who rejected Christian dogma, pours forth his invocation, the utterance of his divinely-inspired thirst for beauty, to the

works of the Divine Spirit who is the Lord and Giver of Beauty.

The Spirit that brings order and beauty out of chaos in the physical world seeks ever to do the same in the moral world. But to create the physical universe was easy to omnipotence; the word produced its own fulfilment. "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." To make of the life of men a thing of ordered beauty was infinitely difficult even for omnipotence. For here were hearts to be won and wills to be inspired; no overmastering force could ever accomplish this. The task can only be wrought out by patience and anguish, by Cross and Passion, by Agony and Bloody Sweat. But Love was equal to the need. The sacrifice was offered, and therein the Spirit's masterpiece was wrought. Greater than systems of stars and planets, lovelier than buttercups and bluebells is the graciousness of God in Christ the Saviour. There the Creator Spirit was for the first time perfectly revealed; there the response from the side of the Creation was for the first time perfectly offered, as a first-fruit of the harvest yet to be garnered. Sunsets do not rejoice in their

own beauty nor forests give thanks to the Lord who made them. He rejoices in them, but they cannot share His joy. Some day, on this earth or elsewhere, there will be a human race living as one brotherhood and fellowship in the bonds of a love that unites all to the common Father and Saviour and in Him to one another, their whole life one act of ceaseless thanksgiving. Then will God be perfectly manifest in the moral as in the physical creation. Order and beauty will have supplanted ugliness and discord; for God, Who is Truth and Beauty and Love, will then be all in all; and the moving of the Spirit on the face of the waters will have issued in such perfection of loveliness in the world as fitly to answer the Creator's love.

XI

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BLESSED TRINITY

(Westminster Abbey, *May 30th*, 1920.)

"And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, 'All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth, Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.'"—S. Matthew xxviii. 18–20.

"He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. . . . Then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all."—I. Cor. xv. 25, 28.

"If Jesus were God, that sort of thing would not happen." So I remember hearing a deeply-embittered working man comment on a story of suffering and misery that he had just told out of his own experience. It was the story of his own wife's girlhood and early

womanhood—one of those stories that disgrace any civilisation of which they can be told. In a religious discussion which had drifted round to the Problem of Evil he told this story, and added his comment: "If Jesus were God that sort of thing would not happen."

Is it true that "all authority in heaven and on earth" belongs to Jesus of Nazareth? Him we know and reverence. We read His sayings and the incidents from His ministry which the evangelists recall; and we turn to the world of our everyday experience, with its cruelty and lust and sordidness, its petty spite and devilish hate, its weight of crushing and often apparently quite barren suffering. By what right can we say that all authority over such a world is in the hands of Jesus?

The Problem of Evil is the one supreme religious difficulty, the only intellectual difficulty, so far as I know, which hinders from prayer and worship those who have a desire for faith and fellowship with God. We cannot doubt that it is soluble, but we are bound to admit that no one has yet found a fully satisfactory solution. To-day we can only

attend to certain aspects of it, and before handling them we may raise certain parallel difficulties which are also to be alleviated by that conception of Almighty God which Christianity was led to form and which the Church celebrates to-day.

It is commonly said that only in the light which shines from the Cross can we begin to understand how the goodness and omnipotence of God may be compatible with a world so full of sin and suffering. But sceptics or critics may reply: "We recognise the heroism of Jesus in His Passion. But there have been other heroes in the history of the world. Even if the Life which culminated in that Passion was unique by virtue of a perfect sinlessness, still, so far as the actual self-sacrifice is concerned, every man who faces death for a cause reaches the same moral level, and many a man has had to face a longer and at least equally intense physical anguish. Why is the Cross anything more than just another instance of the suffering in the world which makes the problem and of spiritual nobility in face of it?"

So the sceptic or the critic quite reasonably

asks. And we are bound to answer: First, if we attend chiefly to the physical sufferings of Christ in His Passion, we are false to the guidance of the Scriptures. The evangelists say little about this. The Agony in the Garden was not physical but mental suffering. The climax of the Passion is not the Word of Pain —"I thirst"—but the Word of Desolation— "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Secondly, we must say that even so, if the Life and Death of Jesus was an historical episode and nothing more, like the life and death of Socrates or of Julius Cæsar, then there could be no doctrine of the Atonement nor would the Gospel be a revelation of God. Even if we confess the deity of our Lord, but regard the experience of the Incarnate as a mere episode in the divine eternity—a few years of service and suffering interpolated in the midst of an everlasting calm—there is still no Atonement, still no revelation of God. It is only the entire Christian faith that works; and for that faith the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ are the manifestation, at a moment of time, of what God eternally is; there the Word—the

self-expression—of God was perfectly uttered. Moreover, the act of God which He wrought at the Incarnation did not end with the Ascension; the Coming of the Spirit in the fulness of His power was and is an integral part of it. If you sever Jesus of Nazareth from the Church and His work through His Spirit in the Church, you make the claim that He is divine a fabulous myth and the doctrine of Atonement both immoral and grotesque. The Gospel can only be the means of reconciling and uniting us to God the Father, if the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God. Omit any part of the Christian conception of God, and the rest at once becomes irrational and futile. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is not a piece of mystery-mongering for the creation of awe in bewildered minds; it is the brief summary statement of Christian people's experience of God.

There is One God, and can be only one; for the essential attributes of God are such as to preclude plurality. There cannot be two Beings who are both of them the origin of all that is; there cannot be two Almighties, or All-Rulers. Polytheism always necessitates

an attribution of different spheres or departments to different deities. That is why the proclamation of One God is the root of all true religion and the only ground for all true worship. But this One God is known to us, not only as the Almighty and Eternal Father, but also as the Crucified and Risen Son and as the inspiring and empowering Spirit. The belief in our Lord's divinity was not merely nor chiefly identification of Jesus of Nazareth with Jehovah, as the disciples had previously learnt from the Old Testament to understand Him; rather it was an enrichment of the conception of God so as to include both the Master whom experience had taught them to regard as divine and the Spirit whom they experienced as a divine power in the Church and in their own souls.

The great theologians tell us that the Holy Spirit is the bond of unity between the Father and the Son. One aspect of that truth is what we need as the solution of our problem to-day. If indeed Jesus is not God, then we still do not know God except by guesswork. We are left with some such creed as Mr. H. G. Wells lately offered us in *God the Invisible*

King, where in place of God the Father we find only a Veiled Being, the source of existence, of whom nothing definite is known ; and in place of the Holy Ghost we have the God whom the author would have us serve, and whom he calls the Invisible King, the power that strives and struggles for the progress of the world but of whom again no definite conception can be formed. The relation between these two is left utterly vague ; and perhaps the Invisible King will at last succumb before the inexorable doom of the Veiled Being.

But if we have learnt to see God in Jesus we are delivered from all this vagueness and possible contradiction. We do not indeed obtain a neat and tidy diagram of universal history, with all occurrences duly indexed, such as some readers of the Bible seem to expect from prophecy. But we obtain a quite definite standard of reference for all problems ; and though we cannot offer a ready-made explanation of the universe—which after all is still in the making and far from ready-made itself—we find that every problem, speculative or practical, which we

refer to our central conviction, becomes less intransigent and tends to vanish away.

But so we come back to our starting point: how dare we say that Jesus is Lord, that all authority in heaven and on earth is His, and that in Him we see the power which actually rules the world? And the answer must be that this can only be so if we find in the world a power at work which can be identified with the Spirit of Jesus, and which is steadily bringing the world into obedience to that Love which He revealed as the innermost nature of God. Just as we can only know the Father in and through the Son, so we can only recognise the Son through realisation of the Spirit. Do we find such a power in the world?

Any answer which is less than a treatise on natural and human history can only be an outline sketch. At first sight it would seem that all life repudiates the existence of such a power. Before we rise in our thought to the stage of life we may find evidence of the Creator Spirit in the scientific perfection of Nature's laws, in the artistic supremacy of Nature's beauty. But is not Life a struggle for existence, in which each creature acts

for itself? How can the life of animals, still more how can the life of man, be regarded as moving under the supremacy of Love?

The question why evil should exist at all is one to be treated by itself. It does exist, and that fact has to be dealt with by believer and infidel alike. Taking the world as it is, with evil actually there, what do we find? We find first that the evil principle if left to itself destroys itself. Even for success in selfish competition, some co-operation is indispensable. Even success in thieving depends on honour among thieves. The animals that survive tend to be those that rise above sheer individual selfishness to family affection and loyalty to the pack or herd. The most widespread fact about life may be competition or self-seeking; but the prevailing principle even in that competition is mutual aid, co-operation, loyalty, love. In human history the lesson is written plainer still. What we call progress is just the widening of the area in which love is operative and service is given. Loyalty at first is only to the tribe; strangers are enemies, and have few rights, if any. It is a great advance when men

realise that the fundamental laws of morality are universal, and that it is as wrong to defraud a foreigner as to defraud a fellow-countryman. Gradually it is learnt that to refrain from injury is not enough, and that only in service to humanity does the individual or the nation attain the destined goal.

Can we find trace, we ask, of any power in the world lifting men from selfishness to love? Even if the world outside supplied no convincing answer, we should still point to the experience of our own souls. When we have striven in prayer, when we have brought the burden of our sins to the Cross, when we have opened our souls to receive the Lord of Love in His sacrament and fed upon Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving, we have known the reality of this power. "We speak that we do know, and testify of that we have seen." The Church of Christ, at least, has knowledge of a power that guides and inspires moral progress.

In the midst of this advance appears the Son of God, Incarnate Love; in all that had assisted the progress God had been revealed, "by divers portions and in divers manners."

But here is a complete manifestation of God the Father who made the world and of God the Spirit who guides the world. He proclaims the law of universal love in correspondence with the Father's love. And what He taught, He did. So He gave mankind a new standard by which to judge both conduct and conventions; but so He gave also a new power to live as He lived. Because He perfectly exhibited the Spirit of God in all the winsomeness of gracious love, the Spirit of God has new and greater authority and influence in our lives. To us the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Jesus, Who died for us and gave Himself for us. Every new victory of love over selfishness which that Spirit wins is new evidence in support of the claim of Christ that all authority is His.

The history of the world finds its meaning in the gathering together of all the various types and temperaments in one fellowship of mutual love and service. This is what S. Paul describes as the purpose of God to sum up all things in Christ. All the varying interests of different national histories are gathered up under this conception. Christ is

at once the revelation of the true meaning of human history and the source of the power by which that meaning is actually wrought out in human experience. That process has two phases, the negative phase of judgment and the positive phase of growth. Our Lord deliberately associated His prediction of His own coming to judge the world with the next great illustration of that judgment—the Fall of Jerusalem. States and civilisations which give themselves to self-seeking go down in ruin, and every time this happens the Son of Man comes in power, and the authority of the Lord of Love is vindicated, for offence against Love is shown to be offence against the order of the world. Gradually men's sympathies widen, their sense of fellowship increases, and therein again the authority of the Lord of Love is vindicated.

The Church exists to be the chief and signal vehicle of the transforming Spirit, who steadily wins men, so far as they open their hearts to Him, from self-seeking to self-giving, from the isolation of selfishness to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We are thus called to enter into the very activity of God whereby He is known

to be God. We are called to make disciples of the nations, teaching them the Gospel of the Sovereignty of Love. We are to baptise them into that threefold Name of God, whereby is indicated His own nature of Love ; in other words we are to plunge the nations in the cleansing tide of the Love which is to us the open secret of the universe. Nothing less than this is our vocation as members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, the vehicle and medium of His Spirit.

To Christ our eyes are turned, the Captain of our salvation, the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession, the Apostle sent forth from God to represent Him before men, the High Priest chosen among men to represent them before God. To Him all authority is given ; He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. But when, by the power of the Spirit whom He sends, He has gathered all men into unity with Himself, He will present us all with Himself as an offering to the Father, and God will be all in all. If we try to rise to the contemplation of the whole universe of things, as it is illumined by the

faith of Christ, we find that all reality is contained within the being of God. The all-embracing circle of Divine Love is found to include everything that exists at all. God the Father, because of His Love, which cannot be content with isolation, utters His Nature in the Creative Word, wherein all created things are implicit; by the full revelation to the created things of the nature of that Word by which they were created He calls forth from them the divine potency which is theirs by virtue of their origin; this potency, which is the Holy Spirit, ever fashions the created things into fuller correspondence with the Love of the Creator, so vindicating the divine authority of the Word of Love which was the agent of creation, and also bringing satisfaction to the Love in the Father's heart. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God, one all-embracing circle of love wherein our souls move like planets in orbits determined for them by the Love which is the centre of their being. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God, in whose very nature we become partakers as the Spirit of Love increasingly possesses us. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God, ever

winning through the uttermost self-sacrifice the unbroken bliss of Love poured forth and welcomed in return.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, one God from everlasting to everlasting.

XII

GOD'S CALL TO THE CHURCH

(WESTMINSTER ABBEY, *July 11th*, 1920.)

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God."—I. PETER II. 9, 10.

"AN elect race": they were a scattered crowd from several different races. "A royal priesthood": they were a despised, hunted, helpless crowd, whose glory was to take buffeting patiently. "A holy nation": they were the dregs of all countries, with no resemblance to nationality. When those great phrases were first spoken to the tribes who had lately escaped from their bondage in Egypt, they must have seemed an outrageous paradox; that they should now be applied to "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" must have seemed a sheer absurdity. What could justify it?

Only that which caused it, namely, a faith in what God had done so vivid and firm that it was proof against all prudential calculations and all the sneers of worldly wisdom. It was not in themselves that members of the early Church found the marks that proclaimed them a royal priesthood; it was in the act of God by which He had called them to the knowledge of His love. All mankind was created to be a people for God's own possession; but those to whom the word of truth is come are especially called to "be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."[1] In the Church should be found, on the scale set by the Church's extent at any time, the realisation of that purpose of God which is at last to be fulfilled in all men. Men ought to be able by looking at the Church to see in it what God can do, not only for individuals, but for a society that trusts in Him.

At a time when all the Bishops of our Communion are gathered from all parts of the world to take counsel together for the work

[1] S. James, I. 18.

of the Church, it is good for us to go back to the question, What is the Church for? We desire to pray at this time that its leaders may be rightly guided; and we shall pray much more intelligently if we keep fresh in mind the task for which the guidance is needed. If we are to consider this question with any profit we must go to the roots.

First let us remind ourselves what the Church is not. It is not a devotional club; it is not an association of such people as have the religious temperament coming together for the purpose of providing themselves with various types of worship according to taste. Again, it is not a philosophical coterie, existing to maintain certain intellectual propositions against other speculators who prefer other theories. Once more, it is not the creation of a priestly caste which is concerned to provide itself with a sphere of activity, as our rationalist friends courteously suggest. Yet it sometimes behaves in such a way as to give colour to all these accounts of it. More particularly, in recent periods we have treated the Church as an institution for the supply of certain needs of our own, with little regard

to the purpose for which the supply is given and scarcely a thought of carrying out such a purpose. When we have got beyond the notion that the Church exists solely for the benefit of its several members, we tend to make it an end in itself, isolated from all the great concerns of human life and therefore liable to be condemned by those without as futile and irrelevant.

To ask what the Church really is, is to ask what it is in the purpose of God. God is Love; that is His inmost nature as revealed to us. He created men both for the manifestation and for the satisfaction of His Love. Love always must communicate itself; that is why self-expression is an essential characteristic of God, as S. John reminds us when he says that in the beginning, or in the fundamental principle of things, was the Word which exists in relation to God and indeed is God. God cannot just be Himself alone; He must share His best; He must express Himself to others. But God is not limited in expression as we are. He can create, bringing into existence out of nothing what will represent His purpose. So His declaration

of His Nature did not take the form of a statement in words; He created beings in His own image, spiritual as He is spiritual, to be the living embodiment of His purpose. He would love them; He would be loved by them; in their love for Him, and in Him for one another, should be seen the beauty of the love which is His own Nature.

But because men were spiritual and capable of love, they were also capable of selfishness. So self-will, which is sin, spoilt the divine plan. And God the Creator, to fulfil His purpose in creation, must needs reveal His nature of love in that act which always springs from love when love is confronted with selfishness, the act of self-sacrifice. The Divine Word, the self-revelation of God, took the form of a human life: Jesus Christ was born. Some shared that human life closely enough to begin to understand. They gradually learnt what selfish man would never have guessed, that loving service to the point of utter self-giving is not only the occasional duty of man but is the eternal glory of God. It was hard for them to learn it. When S. Peter was first swept into the confession

that His Master was the Messiah, the agent and representative of God, he was dismayed by the teaching which the Lord at once began to give. "The Son of Man must suffer many things . . . and be killed." "Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him." But when they understood, this became the supreme glory of their God. "We proclaim a Messiah on a Cross, to Jews a scandal and to Gentiles an absurdity, but to the very people who are called, both Jews and Greeks, a Messiah who is God's power and God's wisdom." [1]

Humanity as a whole had not realised its vocation. After long preparation through the history of Israel, God came Himself on earth and made Himself known to the few who had eyes to see and ears to hear. They passed on the knowledge to other such, and these became "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures," the first to live, as all are called to live, in the comradeship of the Divine Love, the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And in those days it was all true. The barriers of religious training, of culture, of

[1] I. Cor. I. 23, 24.

social position, of sex difference, all disappeared. In place of the familiar contending factions there was "one man in Christ Jesus." The scattered congregations were one Body, the Body of the Messiah. The "elect of the Dispersion" in many lands were "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." And they knew perfectly well that they had these splendid dignities not merely to boast of or to enjoy, but that they might "show forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

We need not trace the process by which that splendid inheritance was lost. The Church survived persecution at the hands of the State; it has nearly died, many times over, of State-patronage. It ceased to be an elect race, for it became identical in membership with the races among which it worked. To be a Christian had once meant very genuinely to share the passion of Christ; it came to mean little more than to follow the fashion of the world. The truth of the Gospel remained sublime; but men came to accept it as they accepted the sunrise and

the sunset, which also are sublime but make no demand for moral sublimity in their beholders. The Church was no longer a city set on a hill, for it had extended its boundaries till hills and valleys and even sickly swamps were included within them.

There was indeed some value in that long period, for though the world so grievously infected the Church, the Church was still able to purify the world in a very great degree. But now, thank God, the old conditions are returning. Many streams have flowed into the river of the Church's life; the Evangelical movement, the Catholic movement, the Liberal movement, have all brought an added volume to its waters as they flow towards their fulfilment in the ocean of God's love. The world that knows not Christ and the world that turns away from Him are once more constantly in our minds. Perhaps the corruption of the Church was due to its forgetfulness of its missionary task more than to any one cause; and that forgetfulness was due mainly to the fact that most Christians, after Europe was converted, had never had contact with any heathen peoples. Those days

are past: with the development of trade and commerce we are dealing every day with the unconverted world. The Church is once more a minority in a world to be won for Christ, and it faces its task refreshed and re-invigorated by the spiritual movements of a century and a half.

The world is helplessly drifting. It would not perhaps be true to say that never before were so many critical problems awaiting decision. It is certainly true to say that never were so many present to men's minds. When the Roman Empire broke up, Europe was all problems; but no one concerned himself about more than a tiny fraction of them. With modern means of communication and the interaction of nation upon nation the whole weight of the burden presses upon us all. What an opportunity for a truly Catholic Church, Catholic not only by right and title through maintenance of the Apostolic faith, but Catholic in fact and power by the inclusion in one Body of the Christians in every nation! Alas! that Catholic Church does not exist. But the prospect for us is not nearly so dispiriting as that before the

elect of the Dispersion in the countries of Asia Minor to whom S. Peter wrote. We—let us try in reverent humility to believe it—we "are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." That is our vocation; but not ours alone. That royal priesthood we share with Christians of every colour, and every kind of culture; and those, who in earthly things may be our enemies, in that holy nation are our compatriots.

The sins of Christians in the past, as well as in the present, make it impossible for us to do in this hour what we see to be demanded by the situation. There is no actual international fellowship of all Christians, so we cannot act as if there were. We have been content to pursue our own salvation; we cannot suddenly become powerful to save the world. God by a miracle of grace might empower the Church; but we have little reason to expect Him to override our sin and folly when that might only help us to ignore the lesson of these times. We pray for His strength in all such abundance as may enable us most truly to show forth His excellencies; but we have to go step by step. At least in

our own nation the Christians of every denomination and every social class could come together in conferences both local and national to seek under the guidance of their common Lord the solution of our economic and industrial problems. And some steps are open to us here and now.

Let us constantly pray for the whole Church of Christ, as the Prayer Book teaches us, remembering that it includes all His true disciples.

Let us test our thoughts on all matters, public or private, by the Mind of Christ, and form our judgments on the events of everyday, whether in London or in Ireland, at Spa or at Amritsar, by that standard only.

Let us never say of any person or of any people words that may make others think less kindly of them except when we are plainly responsible for making known some hidden truth.

Then, trying thus to act as members of the Fellowship of the Divine Love, let us expect from our worship and our communion with God, who is Love, an inflow of power to live as members of God's holy nation, the first-fruits of His creatures. If our faith has not

inspired our citizenship, it is largely because we have not expected it. God never forces His gifts upon us. We must seek if we would find; we must knock if the door is to be opened. And we must be ready for sacrifice in the life of the Church or of the nation as truly as in our own individual lives.

For the election of God is not to self-complacent comfort but to fellowship with Christ, whom men hated because He bade them love one another; the royalty of Christ is seen not in pomp but in sacrifice; his Holy nation will not be withdrawn into a secluded sanctity, but will live in this world by the powers of the world to come, the powers of God who is Almighty Love. By Cross and Passion, by Agony and Bloody Sweat, God showed to us His excellencies; if we are to show them to the world, it must be through the same sacrifice of self-will. The Love of God is the cause of the Creation; the Love of God is the goal of history; to us who know that Love the call is given that we, dedicating our lives to Him, should show forth His excellencies, till we with all men see Him as He is and seeing Him are made like Him.

XIII

PRIESTHOOD

(Westminster Abbey, *July 18th*, 1920.)

"Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests."—Revelation v. 9, 10.

So the Church of the Ages celebrates the sacrifice and triumph of the Lamb. It is the counterpart of S. Peter's address to the elect of the Dispersion in many lands: "Ye are a royal priesthood." But we are shy of claiming our priesthood; the very word has become an object of dislike. What is this thing which is so permanent a feature of all religion, so constantly attacked by some of the best spirits in successive generations, so plainly adopted by and incorporated into Christianity? What is it, and what is its value? The answer here, as to every question concerning

essential features of the religious life of men, must be sought in the nature and purpose of God.

The whole world is God's creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." In its order and beauty God's character is in part displayed. In particular mankind was created to show forth the glory of God. But it is abundantly plain that the physical world displays more beauty in some places than in others. It is equally plain that among the races of men some show more of the divine excellencies than others. This is the great principle of election, which runs through the length and breadth of human history. Some races and some individuals receive opportunities that are denied to others, and those opportunities constitute their vocation. All opportunities and privileges are given that they may be shared. History estimates the nations, not according to the greatness of their power to impose their will, but according to their ability to communicate to the world special treasures of their own. We honour the ancient Greeks, not because of military victories, but because they inaugurated

European civilisation, and all Western culture rests on their intellectual achievements. We honour the ancient Romans, not because they spread an empire over most of the known world, but because they carried with them the justest administration then existing and through this impressed upon the nations the value and the majesty of law. The empire of Assyria was almost as extensive as that of Rome, but no one holds Nineveh in especial honour. It is not power but service which brings dignity to States in the calm judgment of history.

All these nations which received and handed on certain spiritual treasures exercised an office of priesthood to the rest of mankind. But the word is most used in connexion with that specially direct relation of man to God which we call religion. Religion, as commonly understood, is not the only link between man and God. The universe is God's handiwork, and science is inspired by a longing for the God who is its Truth. Art is the effort to appreciate and express the God who is its Beauty. Morality and politics are endeavours to discover and to follow the Way and the

Life which are of God. Many a man is in living relationship with the Divine Word, the Son of God, without as yet giving any conscious thought to Jesus of Nazareth, in whom that Word became flesh. But these activities only find their fulfilment when they are combined with a conscious relationship to God and a desire to serve Him, just as religion on its side only finds its fulfilment when it inspires and co-operates with science, art and morality. We do not naturally speak of the priesthood of a great artist, though such language would be more than a mere metaphor. We tend to confine this word to the sphere of religion itself.

In this sphere it is as plain as in those of art or politics that some nations and some persons have a natural pre-eminence. They are called by God to represent religion to the world as the scientist and the artist represent art and science. In the ancient world beyond all controversy this call was given pre-eminently to Israel. There is no religious development in the ancient world that is for a moment comparable to that which modern research has enabled us to trace in the Old

Testament. And the burden of many an Old Testament prophet is the duty of Israel to be indeed a missionary nation, sharing with others the privileges which at first it alone received. Israel was called to be the priest of the Lord among the nations, teaching them the law of the Lord and leading them to obedience and worship. This vocation now belongs to the Christian Church, for the sign of it at any period is the possession of the fullest existing knowledge of God. If indeed it be true that in Jesus Christ the very Word of God became flesh, then the sign of God's calling to this priesthood is to be found in the supreme privilege of knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. All Christian people are therefore members of a fellowship that is charged with a priesthood to all the world.

Every phase of human history exhibits the operation of this natural priesthood, as we may reasonably call it. Progress does not come by a steady advance of the whole mass of mankind. It comes by the gift of new insight to individuals or quite limited groups; the degree of advance that they

make can be measured by the volume of popular odium that they draw upon themselves, though we cannot relieve ourselves of responsibility for forming our own judgments by the simple expedient of accepting as new truth whatever is both novel and unpopular. New notions are quite often fantastic, and many which pose as new are hoary absurdities, well known to students of the history of thought.

That there should be some special priesthood in the religious sphere is congruous with all that we know of nature and of history. And this whole principle of priesthood finds its culmination in Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls Him. He is the Apostle of our confession because He was sent forth from God to represent God to men ; He is our High Priest because He was chosen from among men to represent men before God, even as we pray in the familiar hymn :

> Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
> And only look on us as found in Him.

That office of Priesthood He now exercises

on earth through His Church, the fellowship of those who have found in Him the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are now responsible for exhibiting the Divine Life to mankind. That is the supreme priestly office, and to it every one of us is called.

It is very noticeable that the Epistle to the Hebrews, which specially sets forth the High-Priesthood of Christ, and therefore also the Christian ideal of Priesthood, represents our Lord not only as fulfilling what was adumbrated by the line of Aaron and his successors, but also as the culmination of a series of heroes in what we often think of as the secular sphere. By faith Abraham became the founder of the ancient Church of Israel; Moses disciplined and Joshua established the people; David confirmed their position; the followers of the Maccabees preserved and handed on a faith which their sufferings had kept inviolate. All these are illustrations of that natural priesthood which reaches its culmination in Christ, who alone is worthy to apply the divine grace to the human soul and to represent humanity before the eternal Father. In the power of Christ

His disciples are called to exercise such a priesthood, and while it is committed to the whole fellowship of the disciples, it finds individual expression in the lives of Christian heroes—such lives as those of S. Francis of Assisi, of David Livingstone, of Abraham Lincoln. These are the great examples, the outstanding figures in the cloud of witnesses, whose lives bear witness to the power of faith, and who remind us that Christ has redeemed us to be unto our God a kingdom and priests. But we find it hard to live up to our vocation. We need perpetually to remind ourselves of its nature and to renew the strength that we receive from God. All days are holy, and all occupations should be a Divine Service; in the heavenly Jerusalem no place is set apart for worship because everything that is done is worship; but we cannot yet rise to that, so we set apart certain days as holy, and offer upon them a specially concentrated worship, to represent, and to remind us of, the sanctity of every day and of all activities. So all the people of God who are by Christ redeemed out of the world are called to be His kingdom and His priests, showing forth the effects of

obedience to His rule and drawing nearer to Him that world from which they are themselves redeemed. But we cannot trust ourselves without further aid to fulfil our obligation, and therefore in the Church certain men are set apart for the specific office of priesthood, not in denial of the priesthood of others, but to represent and remind them of the priesthood of that whole Body of Christ, whereof we all are members. Priesthood becomes evil just when it is thought of as belonging to the ordained ministry exclusively, instead of representatively. In every right priestly act, the agent is Christ Himself; and the Body of Christ on earth is not the clergy but the whole Church, which exercises certain of its priestly functions through the organs which exist for that purpose; but the act is the act of the whole Body.

We are then all of us called to be priests unto our God. The special activity of a priest is usually sacrifice; but our part in the Christian sacrifice must claim our whole attention on another occasion. To-day let us ask ourselves if we take seriously this ministry that is ours. Do we try to bring

the healing love of Christ into all our dealings with men? Do we carry with us the spirit of God's pardon, ending alienation and bitterness and resentment? Do we seek by self-examination and communion with God in Christ to deepen our insight so that men find in us the sympathy and wisdom of Jesus? Are we the friends of the outcast, the upholders of the oppressed? Do we proclaim the Kingdom of God and act adventurously as those who believe in its reality? Christ has in great measure entrusted His cause in the world to us. He yearns for His love to men to be declared; are you declaring it? He burns with anger against pride and self-complacency and the search for riches; are you condemning these things in yourself and others? He died to bring His Gospel true; are you doing anything or suffering anything to teach men the reality of God's Fatherhood and Sovereignty? We are called to be a kingdom and priests unto our God; woe be to us if we are negligent in our priesthood or traitorous citizens of His Kingdom.

XIV

THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE

(Westminster Abbey, S. James's Day, 1920.)

"Jesus said unto them . . . are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? . . . And they said unto him, We are able."—S. Mark x. 38, 39.

Would they have said that if they had already known the story of Gethsemane? Would they have said that if they had heard their Master's imploring cry, "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me"? They were high-spirited, these two sons of thunder. We need not doubt their loyalty or their heroism. They were ready for great endurance. When they answered so confidently "We are able," they knew their strength to face suffering and death. But what they had asked for implied, if they only knew it, a quality far loftier than human heroism; it implied a fellowship with God in that

divine agony which is the supreme mystery of the Godhead. And the very form in which their request was put was proof of their incapacity at that time to receive the boon for which they asked.

They had prayed as all of us are tempted to pray: "We would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of Thee." That is the perfect expression of what Christian prayer is not. Our aim in prayer must never be to use God's power for the satisfaction of our desires, but to bring our wills into union with His, so that His power may work both with and through us to the accomplishment of His purpose which is become our own. We have no right to pray, "We would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of Thee"; our prayer should be, "We would that Thou shouldest do with us whatsoever may help the accomplishment of Thy purpose for the world."

The two disciples defined their desire. They sought the places of chief honour and power in the divine Kingdom. And their prayer is paraphrased for them. To reach the highest honour is to be in closest fellowship with the

King. But His royalty is not the sort that men easily desire for themselves. He puts forth His power by the completeness of His self-sacrifice ; He reigns over the souls of men from the Cross of His agony. The Kingdom of God is not a Kingdom after the fashion of this world. Its great ones are not they who lord it over others, but those who serve most readily. The King Himself, the Son of Man, is among men as one that serveth. For kings of the earth men have been called upon to die ; but this King first died for His subjects.

The figure of the Cup was familiar from its use by Prophets and Psalmists, but this is the first recorded use of it by our Lord. As the words lingered in the memory of His friends, they would acquire new significance. Before long there would come the scene in the Upper Room, when He took the bread, of which He said that it was His Body, and broke it, and then gave to them the cup, saying it was His Blood of the new covenant. Within a few hours of that action, He would be praying in an agony of amazement and dread that the cup might pass away from Him. We know the issue of His prayer. He emerged

from that shuddering fear in the calm dignity of a perfect steadfastness: "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And later on, it may be, as He hung upon the Cross, He emerged from a still deeper anguish, wherein it seemed that even God had forsaken Him, not only to the calm of steadfastness, but to a deep desire for that cup from which He had shrunk—"I thirst."

When the Lord of our souls speaks to us as He spoke to His disciples, we have the full interpretation of His words before us: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink?" Few of us can confidently answer, "We are able." It is as much as most of us can rise to if we can answer with sincerity, "We will try."

Our critics often contrast Christianity with other faiths by complaining that whereas there are many Mohammedans who live up to their Mohammedanism, or Confucians who live up to their Confucianism, there are few Christians who live up to their Christianity. It is true enough. The question rather is, Do any live up to it?

The language of religion often seems at

first to be exaggerated. And if our aim is only to be what the world about us seems to expect, that appearance is inevitable. Most people can, by the help of public opinion, attain to the level demanded by public opinion. For, after all, public opinion is only the opinion of most people and is not likely, therefore, to demand what most people cannot supply. If this mere conventionality of existence is our aim, we shall certainly find the traditional language of religion to be almost perverse. We do not then feel that there is no health in us, or that we are miserable sinners, still less that the burden of our sins is intolerable. But then also we are not beginning to be Christian people.

We are called to be a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a kingdom and priests unto our God; we are required not merely to fulfil the obligations of average good citizenship, but to let men see in our characters the result of trusting God. Especially are we called to the offering of the true sacrifice. All down the ages man has felt an instinct that prompted him to offer sacrifices to his God. It was a crude and horrible ritual in the early days.

But it was very early realised that the spiritual value of it lay in the dedication of life which it symbolised, and the fellowship with God resulting from that dedication. There the worshipper brought his victim; the victim was slain; the blood, representing life, was offered by the priest. But the law had only a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of those things. It "was impossible that the dedicated life of bulls and goats should take away sins"; but "Christ has entered into the holy place," the presence and fellowship of the eternal God, "not through the dedicated life of goats and calves, but through His own dedicated Life, having obtained eternal redemption." In place of the "sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin" is set the reality of which these are only the symbols—"Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God."

In the one true sacrifice, Christ is both Priest and Victim. But that is only to say that the one true sacrifice is self-sacrifice. It is exactly this truth which our Lord has enshrined in the sacrifice that He has bidden

us perpetually to offer. Christians have become so accustomed to the thought of self-sacrifice that they easily regard the crucifixion as a sacrifice. And so indeed it was. But, if we remember what the word sacrifice meant to the ancient world, we shall see at once that the Apostles could never have come to think of our Lord's Death, still less His Life, as a sacrifice, if He had not Himself performed a sacrificial act which He associated with His Death. To men of that time the Passion would not have appeared to be a sacrifice, nor anything at all resembling one ; but the action of our Lord at the Last Supper was beyond all doubt a sacrifice. And this sacrifice He explained to be representative of His obedience unto death. "In the same night that He was betrayed," in the moment when He voluntarily submitted to the consequences of treachery in His disciple and of worldliness in the Church, He took the bread, saying that it was His Body, and broke it. He took the outpoured wine, saying that it was His Blood, the sacrificial Blood whereby the new covenant between God and Man was sealed, and gave it to His disciples. So He instituted

a new religious rite, to be perpetually celebrated by His followers, as a witness to the claim which God their Redeemer makes upon them.

We are called to repeat, through the agency of the priest who embodies the priesthood of the whole people of God, that act of Christ which He did in the moment of His completed obedience. We are to receive the Body that is broken for the Kingdom of God and the Blood that is shed to reconcile man to God, in order that the power of that sacrifice may work in us, so that we too are ready to break our bodies and shed our blood for the same cause. We join in the representative sacrifice in order that we may receive strength for our actual sacrifice, which is the offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice" to our God. And here the spiritual nature of the claim upon us may lead to our deceiving ourselves. It is true that only dedication of the will is of value and that by no ascetic practices alone can we please God. But in this world reality can be roughly tested by its physical manifestation. The conclusion of S. Paul's

great argument in support of a spiritual, as distinct from a legalistic, religion is: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies"—not your spirits—"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Just because it is so supremely real, the Christian faith is little concerned with spiritual states that have no physical effect or expression. Its interest is always in making the physical a true vehicle and expression of the spiritual. It is sacramental through and through, from the Incarnation onwards. So the test of our obedience or of the sincerity of our Eucharistic worship will always be found in the use that we make of our material resources, our bodies in their strength of brain or of muscle, and our money. Does the Kingdom of God or our own comfort come first?

"Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink?" The question comes to the whole Church and to every disciple of the Lord. Can we sincerely answer "We will try?" We know that we need the sustaining strength of the Holy Spirit if we are to be faithful in our discipleship to Christ, our fellowship with

Him. But most of us need to seek His help at a more elementary stage than that. It is not only that we are weak, and fail in constancy. Do we even want to take our share in the sacrifice by which the world is redeemed, and to fill up what is lacking of the afflictions of the Messiah? In the Garden of His Agony when the Cup was offered to His lips, His three chosen disciples were asleep while He prayed. Still He bears the burden of the whole world's sin and sorrow. Do we still sleep and leave Him to bear it alone? Or shall we genuinely seek His strength to bear it with Him? He is waiting, and the world is waiting, until His friends be found truly faithful. Is He to wait for ever?

XV

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

(S. Martin's-in-the-Fields, Easter Day, 1918.)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."—Romans viii. 35–37.

Never has the triumphant challenge of Easter been flung to the world with so noble a defiance as to-day. Man's sin, and its companion death, are apparently supreme. All suffer together; for we are so made that the weal or woe of any must be the weal or woe of all. And when the powers of evil, nearly four years ago, cried havoc and let slip the dogs of war, they involved almost all humanity in one overwhelming disaster.

O storm of death!
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
And thou colossal skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career

> In thy devastating omnipotence
> Art king of this frail world, from the red field
> Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital
> . . . . . .
> A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
> His brother death.

Shelley's lines in no degree exaggerate the horror of what we are watching. "We are killed all the day long. We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter." But it is exactly in these things that we are more than conquerors.

This is the eternal splendour of Easter. It does not merely drive away the gloom and bring light in its place; but it irradiates the very substance of sorrow making it bright with its own unquenchable joy. The Cross remains the greatest effort of evil; nothing worse can ever be done than the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. But as we look back to it on Easter Day we see it, not as a disgrace which is past, but as a glory which is eternal; not as a humiliation left behind, but as a boast to be proclaimed for evermore; not as a momentary weakness, but as everlasting power. "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross." "We proclaim a Messiah

on a Cross, to Jews a scandal and to Gentiles an absurdity, but to the very people who are called a Messiah who is God's power and God's wisdom."

It is not one of the primary aims of the Christian faith that it should solve intellectual perplexities, though if it is the truth it must contain their solution. To-day we do not pause to ask why there should be disasters and calamities. That such are the lot of man is plain enough in the sight of believer and infidel alike. Our concern to-day is with the question how those disasters appear when viewed in the light of the Resurrection.

We know the sorrow of those whose sons or husbands are called to serve their country amidst the perils of war ; and we remember the home at Nazareth from which our Lord came forth to challenge the political and religious authorities of the day. Long before that the promise concerning the Son had been accompanied by the word to the Mother—"Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." And as she stood beneath the Cross, she knew what that warning had meant. How exultant, then, the joy on

the first Easter Day when the Mother knew that death had not robbed her of her Son, but rather had made her sure of Him for ever. That is what this Easter means, in proportion to our faith, to many aching hearts. We, too, have stood by while those we loved have been offered as a sacrifice. They are not lost to us. In their closer union with God we find them once more in the degree in which our own souls attain to unity with Him; not only in some far off, divine event, but in His answer to prayer and in His gracious nearness to our struggling love, them that are asleep in Jesus doth God bring with Him.

If we turn from private sorrow to public anxiety, the same assurance is offered to us. Do we tremble for the whole cause of liberty and justice? Are we watching with strained attention the sway of the battle in France? We are bound to do so. For we live in the world of time, and the destiny of many generations is in the balance. Yet to-day we are lifted to the levels of eternity and know that there the cause for which we strive is in no jeopardy, for it is the cause of justice and liberty, which is the cause of God.

If ever hopes are dashed and all the outlook is dark, let us remember what it meant to the disciples when the forces of evil seemed to have triumphed utterly. It was not only a lost Friend that they mourned, but a defeated cause. And they learnt that what they took for defeat was itself the means to the victory they desired.

But it is always necessary that we should remember what it is that triumphed in the Cross and Resurrection. It was not the purpose of one will which asserted itself successfully against others and prevailed. Judged from that standpoint the Cross remains a defeat, and the Resurrection is at best a mere reversal of it. The triumph that we witness is a triumph in which no one is conscious of defeat at all ; for to be defeated by Christ can only mean the loss of self-will and the acceptance of His love, so that in His triumph the conquered rejoice as truly as the conqueror. And we can only claim our part in the Easter victory in so far as we are filled with the love to which that victory belongs. If either as individuals or as a nation we come to the foot of the Cross or

to the empty tomb mainly for what we can find there for ourselves, we shall never find all that may be found. It was only to those who had loved Him in His humiliation that the Lord Jesus revealed Himself in His glory. We do not come to the Cross because sin and sorrow are a burden too heavy for us to bear. "If it is that which brings us to Jerusalem it is not that which makes us hasten out to Calvary." We come there because He is our Lord, and He is dying. So, too, on Easter morning we do not come to greet the risen Lord in order to hear the promise of our own immortality, but because of our joy in the triumphant life of the Master Whom we love, and to meet those who are asleep in Him, Whom God brings with Him.

And even so it is not chiefly consolation, but rather inspiration, that we seek. We celebrate the Resurrection-triumph of Incarnate love. We long to share that triumph. But that can only be so if triumphant love is in our souls. And the triumph of love must be over the enemies of love, which are hatred and malice, envy and contempt, suspicion and indifference.

The Easter message proclaims the triumph of Love over all of these. But it wins by suffering. If we show love in the face of hatred, we must not expect to overcome the hatred without suffering. It is by its suffering that love prevails; that is the message of Good Friday. But through its suffering it does prevail; that is the message of Easter Day. The Resurrection proclaims that the only real success is that which is in store for those who love, and will practise a chivalry, even a knight-errantry, which to the world must seem grotesque. We are to trust the untrustworthy and love the unlovely, accepting the misery of betrayals and ingratitude, until our constancy in loving and trusting softens and wins the malignant or the suspicious heart. We are to heap up the coals of fire on the head of the unloving, as the blacksmith heaps the glowing coals on the iron bar, till hardness gives place to malleability and we overcome evil with good.

The man who lives thus in our fallen world will suffer; say, rather, the Man who did once live thus in our fallen world did suffer. But if we hold fast to Him He carries us to the

triumph that He Himself has won, the triumph of love over hatred and malice, over envy and contempt, over suspicion and indifference—even over Death, which is Love's last enemy because it seems to rob Love of its beloved. To such a triumph we look forward. It cannot be completed under the conditions of life upon this planet. But even here it can be tasted. We look forward to a world where mutual trust is universal, where each success or failure wins from all a genuine sympathy in joy or sorrow, where every man and woman, where every society and nation, where every house of business or manufacturing firm, where every branch of the Christian Church, sincerely desires and rejoices at the well-being of every other. But that can only come if those who believe in such an order will live even now as members of it, suffering in this world whatever their loyalty to that heavenly citizenship involves. For it is not in spite of its anguish in this world, but in and through that anguish, that Love wins the victory.

Who shall separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ?

XVI

THE PEACE OF GOD

(Eton College Chapel, *Nov.* 10*th*, 1918.)

"Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks for the help of his countenance."—Psalm xlii. 6, 7 (Prayer Book).

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."—Philippians iv. 7.

We are standing, as we know, at one of the cardinal turning-points of the world's history. We have witnessed one of the comings of the Son of Man. When the war broke out many expressed perplexity that God should permit such a calamity to befall His world. But Christians who had studied the teachings of their Master were not perplexed. He had told us with perfect plainness that there would be wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, until men

accepted and applied His Gospel of the Kingdom. To point the moral of His teaching He connected what He said about the end of the world (or the end of that age) with the fall of Jerusalem. The Jews had not known the day of their visitation. They were blind to the things which belong unto peace. They could not rise to the hope of a spiritual kingdom, but clung to secular ambitions. Therefore they would provoke the wrath of Rome and go down before it. But the spiritual failure was the cause of their downfall, and in the fall of Jerusalem the Son of Man came with power because its fall was the result of defiance of His authority, and therefore also was its vindication. He came with power when the Roman Empire fell; He came with power in the break-up of mediæval Christendom; He came with power in the French Revolution; He is come with power in our day and generation. Every time that we see a civilisation involved in ruin through its neglect of His supremacy we witness a coming of the Son of Man.

But while by the inexorable operation of the law of righteousness in history, He judges

and destroys the evil, He never forces upon men the good that He would offer them. For it is a spiritual good, and only through the free acceptance of their hearts and wills can it be received. So history waits for that repentance of mankind, that turning to God that they may live by His law, which is the condition of the coming of the Kingdom of God now as when John the Baptist first said "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Whether or not we shall use the opportunity that lies before us depends chiefly upon whether or not we realise where man's chief need lies. And we go back for this to the Psalm which tells the story of a man who had learnt this lesson, as we have had the chance of learning it, from calamity. "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they daily say unto me, 'Where is now thy God?' Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself, for I

went with the multitude and brought them forth into the house of God in the voice of praise and thanksgiving among such as keep holy-day. Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give Him thanks for the help of His countenance."

"My soul is athirst for God." That is the deepest fact about human nature, though it is not in all men that this cry from the depths becomes conscious and articulate. It is echoed centuries later by the Apostle, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." But it is often that for our natural yearnings we find fuller expression in the Old Testament than in the New, just because the writers of the New Testament are so filled with the enjoyment of God's gift that they have less thought to bestow on man's hunger which it satisfied. The author of this familiar Psalm had learnt to realise his need as many have learnt in the years of war; he had learnt by grief and calamity. He had indeed been a worshipper of God as others were. He was a leader of multitudes to the House of God on holy days.

Yet calamity has come upon him; and in his calamity he finds not God but only his own need of God. Mockers scoffingly ask what good his religion has been to him: "Where is now thy God?" And he has no answer. As he ponders the question, he can only pour out his heart by himself. How has he gained by his religion if his soul is so full of heaviness and disquiet? He is superior to the vulgar who taunt him with the calamity itself. He does not say that his religion is futile because trouble has overtaken him; what distresses him is that the faith which he professed leaves him without the strength to face the trouble with cheerfulness when it comes. And he can only answer his doubts by an exhortation to himself which is a resolution: "Put thy trust in God; I will yet—in spite of my sufferings—thank Him for the joy of His countenance." But we ought not to need thus to summon our faith on emergencies: it ought to arise of itself to support us; and the answer which the Psalmist gives to his doubt, though the best that a man can ever do for himself, is still a feeble answer.

But he has found what it is man's chief

task to find. He has found his need. And that remains our first task to-day. The great events of the world's history have lately been following one another in a succession so rapid and bewildering that we are apt to become absorbed in problems which, though vital, are not primary, and can never be rightly solved while the primary problems are neglected. We are in so great a hurry, and rightly in so great a hurry, to sketch out the lines on which the new and better world is to be built, that we tend to forget what is the only source of the only civilisation that can satisfy men's souls. Men cannot in their own strength and wisdom build the new Jerusalem; it comes, if at all, in one way only: it comes down out of heaven from God. The needs of the State and of secular society are to-day so urgent that we tend to think chiefly of our contribution, whether great or small, and of the aspirations that we hope to realise. But we shall have little contribution to make if our life is to be all giving—however generously—with no receiving. And, after all, the State and secular society can never give men what they want. The State works

for progress : man needs eternity. The State hopes for a millennium : man needs salvation. The State aspires to brotherhood : man needs God. And across the broken implements of battle or the clamorous tongues of diplomacies and politics there peals the thunder of the voice divine : " Be still ; and know that I am God."

Our need is God ; not what He will do for us, even for our souls, but just Himself. If our parents or our friends uphold our best purposes and strengthen our weak points, we are grateful ; but we do not seek their company chiefly for the sake of their influence, still less for the sake of the presents which they may give us from time to time. We want to be with them, not as a means to some further end but as an end in itself. We enjoy their company more than anything they can do for us. And it ought to be so, and it can be so, in our relationship with God. At least we can learn to realise that He in Himself is our chief need. " My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God "—not for His blessings or promises, precious as these are, but for Himself. " Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for." It is some-

thing if we have found out that that is what we ought to want to say.

And with all our fuller knowledge of God than was possible to the Psalmist, we shall often be unable to get beyond that cry. To all who are sincere with themselves there come dry, dead periods, when for our feelings at any rate our religion seems utterly empty. We say our prayers, but they seem to mean nothing. Sometimes those periods last for months together, sometimes they pass after a day or two. There is a rhythm in the life of the soul—at least in its growth, which lasts most, if not all, of our lives—which is like the rhythm of the seasons. There is a winter to be passed through before the spring and summer return. No doubt this is a sign of immaturity, and a few great souls pass beyond it before they die ; but those who do so often tell us, as S. John of the Cross tells us, that before the open vision of God is reached we have to pass through "the Dark Night of the Soul." What they experience in vivid intensity is what comes to all of us according to our spiritual measure.

So when the dry times come, when winter

seems to have set in, do not be dismayed or rebellious. It is a normal feature of growth. But take great care of two things. Be careful first that the sense of alienation from God is not caused and sustained by some continued course of wrong-doing or wrong-thinking. To defy conscience even in small ways is a sure method of sterilising the spiritual life. But be careful also to keep in mind the real nature of your spiritual hunger. What you need is God; not some gift of God in joyous confidence, or in assurance that all is well with your friends in the other world, nor any other of His priceless boons. What you need is God; not spheres of service nor hopes of world reconstruction, nor certainty of Heaven after death. What you need is God Himself—the Eternal, Almighty and All-loving Father. Having God you will have also all the other things that our souls rightly crave, but which apart from Him can never satisfy. "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God." "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

If we are to be worthy of the supreme opportunity which, in God's Providence, is ours we must seek to satisfy that deepest need. How shall we fitly celebrate peace? Only by seeking to win for ourselves that inward peace which is calm amid all storms and is itself the source of the only true peace on earth. But that we can only find each of us one by one. It is by opening our hearts to the heavenly Father's love, and suffering Him to draw us into fellowship with Himself, that we may most fitly commemorate the victory which He has given us, most worthily celebrate the friends who have died for us, most effectively equip ourselves to play our part in securing that righteous and abiding peace for which we pray, and in making England more worthy of the sacrifice of its sons.

For when we turn to the problems before us, whether international or industrial, they all come back at last to one question: Are we to build again on the assumption of mutual antagonism and suspicion, either between the nations or between the different classes within a nation, so that the task of the statesman is

to provide a system of police which may prevent the antagonists from destroying both one another and the community at large, or are we to build on the assumption of mutual trust and brotherhood because all are children of one heavenly Father ?

This is a religious question. What do we mean when we say that God is Love ? We ought to mean, amongst other things, that the universe is so ordered that all purposes or policies which are alien from love and are marked by self-seeking are bound to issue sooner or later in catastrophe because they are in opposition to the Supreme Power, while all purposes or policies which are akin to love and are free from self-seeking are bound to issue in fulfilment, through whatever sacrifices they may have to pass, because they are in alliance with the Supreme Power.

Our first need, then, is fellowship with God ; and that brings with it a peace which guards our hearts and thoughts, our feelings and plans, keeping them true to the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is in proportion as we attain to fellowship with God that we can bring nearer the time when mercy and truth shall meet

together, when righteousness and peace shall kiss ; when truth shall flourish out of the earth and righteousness in answer look down from heaven.

O Blessed Saviour, Hero of heroes and Prince of Peace, call us and all men into fellowship with Thee, that sharing Thy perfect union with the Father we may know that peace which passeth understanding and therein find guardianship of heart and thought in Thee. For we are weak and selfish and proud. Even our suffering leaves us selfish still. By Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension, give us the Life Divine, the Life of Love, which is alone the very bond of Peace.

XVII

TRIUMPHANT SACRIFICE

(Rugby School, *June* 21*st*, 1919.)

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen . . . And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."—Hebrews xi. 1, 39, 40.

By strange methods, to men's limited understanding, does God carry His purpose to fulfilment. As we watch the processes of history, whether natural or human, it is hard to find in any separate occurrences evidence of an Almighty Love. Only when, urged on by faith or by that despair which is in reality faith's fiercest protest, we try to rise to the contemplation of the story as a whole, do we begin to find a meaning which bears the impress of a Divine Will. There is at first

sight a great abundance of waste and futility ; lives above others full of promise are cut short ; movements that seem to contain the very hope of the Kingdom of Heaven fail of fulfilment, or achieve their end to find in it only a source of fresh evil to the world. The cynic has no difficulty in proving his case from history.

Yet another reading of history is also possible for those who regard this world and all that happens in it as a fragment in a wider scheme. Lives are cut short, not to perish with promise unfulfilled but to serve more fully, and with a surer direction, in the nearer vision of the Source of Life ; movements end in what seems like disappointment because the divine purpose is wider than the limits of man's comprehension, and nothing must be rounded into a completion which excludes any part of the richness of God's blessing. Even in this world the one life cut short becomes an inspiration to thousands, and the failure of every forward movement leads to the effort for a still ampler progress.

So we refuse the cynic's well-established wisdom and accept the precarious but

ennobling apprehensions of faith. We do not expect or ask to understand; for the faith by which we turn from cynical disillusionment to inspiring hope is itself the assurance of things that are only hoped for, the proving of things not seen. To turn it into certainty would be to destroy its spiritual value. Because faith is hazardous, it is noble; because it is ever putting to the proof the powers that are not seen, it perpetually supplies its own accumulating evidence, and despises the calculations of a worldly prudence. In such faith the heroes of our race have fashioned all that is noble in its history thus far; by the same faith must we both interpret their heroism and seek to imitate it.

No doubt when we think of the friends that we have lost, it is of different names that each finds his memory most full. But here, as at all other great Schools in England, we stand at a place made sacred for ever by the steady stream of boys who, throughout the war, went forth to danger and endurance without shrinking and without parade, taking the step that others call heroic in the same temper in which they would have done whatever else might

have come next in the ordinary course of duty. Nowhere has the bitterness of the war been more keenly felt than at Schools; nowhere has the splendour of its heroism shone with brighter light. Of those who went some are returned, some will not return. We draw no distinction. All made the great sacrifice, for all put life to the hazard; and all alike, here or elsewhere, will render to God a service enriched by the reality of a sacrifice achieved. But it is natural that our thoughts should fasten chiefly on those who, in the common enterprise and sacrifice, are gone from among us, if only because we cannot greet them face to face; and though we know that in work and worship we are still united with them, yet we, who largely live by the bodily senses, have to quicken our faculties if we are to know their presence. We have not lost them; and one day the old intercourse will be renewed. The conditions of that other life are quite unknown. But nothing we have valued will be lost. The good comradeship, the high purpose, the close sympathy, the ringing laughter—all that we have loved in them is ours still and shall be ours for ever in the

Communion of Saints, the Fellowship of the Followers of Jesus, who also died in youth for the sake of the Kingdom that He served and wherein, by virtue of His sacrifice, He reigns.

"These all died not having received the promise." No doubt they would have expressed in very varying terms the motives that inspired and sustained them; and many could not have given any expression to those motives at all. But those who watched could see the high idealism working as strongly when it was unconscious leaven as when it was formulated in a purpose or a creed. The hope of a better England and a better world—trite as the phrase is become—sums up the varied aspirations that sustained men in the war. Some who went out died before fighting ceased; even the promise of purely technical peace they did not receive. Others have indeed seen that, yet find the world by no means purged of evil. Selfishness, whether personal, sectional or national, is still doing its deadly work. The vices that we resisted when, embodied in German statecraft and military power, they swept across Belgium and northern France, are not annihilated either abroad or

in our own country. There is still the battle of the Lord to fight; we are still called to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

"They without us will not be made perfect." The purpose for which they died will not be accomplished, the satisfaction of their souls will not be won, until we too have brought our full contribution to the common treasure, which in the spiritual world is sacrifice. So the Seer of the Apocalypse beheld under the celestial altar the souls of those whose faithfulness had led them to death, waiting and crying out "How long"; and they are bidden to wait still, until others should complete their sacrifice. So our friends await the fruit of our constancy, and for their sakes—for their sakes—we sanctify ourselves.

And it is "a better thing" that is thus prepared. The salvation of God for which we work and wait is not only a salvation of individuals one by one. "God so loved *the world*;" that is the motive that prompts the divine self-sacrifice. And we who have seen the proud sorrow of parents, who gladly as well as sadly have given for their country

lives dearer to them than their own, should have a fresher understanding of that motive : " God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."

The divine self-sacrifice, which is the true glory of God, once for all manifested on Calvary, renews itself whenever men, whom God made in His own image, accept for themselves the saying " Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God." This is the glory of the Lord whereof heaven and earth are full—the eternally actual glory of God, the permanently possible glory of Man. To take our part in that divine self-sacrifice, to share in that divine glory, we are called even as we are incorporated into the mystical Body of the Christ, filling up that which is lacking of His afflictions. There remains a counsel of God to be fulfilled through our obedience, expressed in forms of sacrifice that at present are hidden ; as we prepare ourselves in humble constancy, we turn our minds to those whose sacrifice on earth is completed and pray that we with them and they with us may be still faithful to the call of God. We do not mourn them ; we rejoice with them. They have

gone down into the river of death, "and all the trumpets sounded for them on the other side." We do not mourn them; we give thanks for them. In them once more we have seen man's victory over the world, which is faith, the being confident in what is hoped for, the putting to the proof of what cannot be seen. We do not mourn them; we exult over them. Among them, at their head, we see that "young Prince of Glory," their Master and ours, who for the joy that was set before Him—the joy of a world by Him redeemed from the desolation of self-seeking to the blessedness of self-giving—endured the Cross, despising shame, and who, because of the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and worship. We salute them, and as we turn again to our own task of service, we lift up our hearts, we lift them up unto the Lord.

"Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest and may light perpetual shine upon them."

"Glory to God in the Highest."

XVIII

OTHER WORLDLINESS

(Repton, *June* 10*th*, 1918.)

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 1–3.

During the last half-century a change has been passing over the religious outlook of Christians which is as profound as that of the Reformation itself. Whether it will prove as permanent it is idle to prognosticate. But if we try to realise the religious outlook of Christians in the middle of the nineteenth century, or at dates earlier than that, we are bound to see that their main concern was with their prospect of "salvation" in another world. For us, whose main concern is with

the world in which we live, it is easy to fall into unfair censures of our forefathers. By salvation the best of them certainly meant deliverance from sin and all that was alien from the love of God, and not any mere escape from the torments of hell or enjoyment of the delights of heaven. But when all allowance is made, there was, in the view which now seems to us old-fashioned, a real self-centredness which is plainly out of harmony with the religion of Christ. And while no doubt the loftier spirits of the older type knew and insisted that only by conduct in conformity with the Divine nature of Love could fellowship with God be realised, yet there was a tendency among pious people to regard earthly conditions as having hardly any importance. Thus Wilberforce, the hero of the abolition of the slave-trade, explains in his *Practical System of Christianity*, that Christianity makes the inequalities of the social order less galling to the poor, largely by insisting on the shortness of the time during which such inconveniences have to be endured in comparison with the eternity of happiness to which the Christian looks forward.

So again Paley, the disastrously predominant theologian of the early nineteenth century, was prepared to instruct the almost destitute poor that their effort to make both ends meet was an agreeable and even exciting occupation which was denied to the unfortunate rich. All of this seems very remote; but I remember attending a missionary meeting at which a speaker tried to stir our emotions by telling us how many people die daily in India "without Christ," and I recollect that a friend expressed my own thoughts afterwards by saying, "I do not much mind their dying without Him; what I can't stand is their having to live without Him." And it is not so very long ago, as I have been told, since a speaker declared in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, amid much approbation, that "It is no part of a Christian's duty to make the world a better place; this world is a mere stage through which we pass on our way to glory." That probably strikes us as an almost ideal expression of the view which we desire with all the passion of our souls to repudiate.

Over against that older view is the conviction that we are called as Christians to

the service of God here and now; that on earth as in heaven His Name is to be hallowed, His Kingdom to come, and His Will to be done. For that Christ has taught us to pray; for that He has summoned us to work. Not there but here is the sphere of our spiritual concern; not then but now is salvation to be won and made manifest. The Christian's duty in regard to slums is not merely to tell the inhabitants that their squalor is of small consequence because soon they will pass to the house of many mansions, but to abolish the slums. The Christian's duty in regard to sweated-labour is not merely to comfort the oppressed with the reminder that earthly conditions are transient, but to destroy the system which makes sweating possible. The Christian's duty in regard to war is not merely to risk his life for his country in sure anticipation of a life beyond the grave, but to help to deliver nations from the spirit that produces wars. The former duty in each case is a real one; but it does not exhaust our obligation, and if either of the two is emphasised alone the whole balance and proportion of life is destroyed.

A remarkable sign of the strength of the new conviction is afforded by the fact that the occurrences of the war have rather deepened than shaken it. When so many of those whom we love most have passed through death, it would be natural if the attention of religious people had swung back to the other world as the chief object of our concern. But it has not been so. Rather it is felt that our best method of commemorating the friends whom we have lost is to do all that lies in our power to make the England for which they died more worthy of their sacrifice.

It seems impossible to doubt that the modern outlook is nearer in spirit to the New Testament, and especially to the Gospels, than was the old-fashioned view. But that view had one great point of strength, and what seems to us the fuller view has two great sources of weakness. It is worth while to attend to these.

The great merit of the old view is its insistence on the necessity for personal discipline. Anyone who took seriously the duty, or even the prudence, of conducting life with

a view to his own personal condition hereafter, was at least committed to a process of winning real self-control. Those who seek first the Kingdom of God must remember that they need just as much discipline of character if they are to be good "soldiers and servants" of Christ as any man could require with a view to his own personal perfection. And as this emphasis on discipline is the great merit of the older view, so the tendency to indiscipline and even to carelessness about our personal life, both in minor matters of morals and in the cultivation of our devotional faculties—our faculties for prayer and worship and communion with God—is the great danger in the more modern view. The cause to which we dedicate ourselves is so vast and all-embracing that the concern for blemishes in our own character seems almost petty. I am not speaking of concern for great faults or vices; anyone who is trying to serve Christ at all will take them seriously, and indeed there is no way of staving off their attack so effective as the absorption of our minds in some large interest. But there is a real danger of moral slovenliness. And we must

be on our guard against it. Moreover, the humdrum duties of every day are liable to seem too small to trouble about when our minds are filled with the vision of the world as it might be ; yet they and no other are our duty at the moment. "Little things are little things ; but faithfulness in little things is a very great thing."

The other danger besetting the modern outlook is the danger that materialism may invade even religion itself. If in view of the social and economic injustice of the world we turn more to the physical conditions than to the characters of men and women, then, whatever our motive, we are betraying our religion to the enemy. But here again we shall be saved from disaster if we will only attend to the facts that are before our eyes. The Labour unrest of the years before the war, which has also appeared in certain critical disturbances in the course of the war, is not to be appeased by any re-distribution of this world's goods. It has its basis in a spiritual discontent and a conviction that the existing order of things is radically unjust, because in effect it denies the personality of

the worker. But that spiritual discontent cannot be satisfied except through a change of heart in the ranks of labour itself only less complete than the change of heart required in most other sections of society.

The two dangers can be summed up as temptations to shallowness. We must not become so concerned with our efforts in our life-time, nor even with the progress of many generations, as to forget the eternal and unchanging truth which gives its meaning to all our little strivings. It is quite plainly impossible that the whole purpose of God for mankind should be carried out under the conditions of life on this planet, and our concern for this life must be an addition to, not a substitute for, our concern for the eternal. To the restless fever of this world and its tumult no man can bring healing unless he habitually lives in the presence of the eternal God with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning, and has in his own soul some measure of the peace which passeth understanding. We are not to neglect the eternal world but to live here and now as its citizens.

For if we are to be in earnest with the new religious outlook which has been given to our time, it means that we are to live in this world by the principles and in the power of the other world. We can never re-make the world by the world's methods. So long as men or nations are mainly concerned with their share of this world's goods there will be strife and misery and hatred. We are animals, and from our animal ancestry we inherit a natural preoccupation with the physical side of things. But we are also spirits, made in the image of God, and from our spiritual endowment we receive the capacity for another fashion of life. Progress is the increasing control of the spiritual over the animal in man. In one sense it is "against nature." The Incarnation was "against nature"; the Resurrection was "against nature." Christ came to call men to a fashion of life which is "against nature" —if by nature we mean what has always been. And in that sense of the word we have to choose between "nature" and Christ. But He has achieved what we could not achieve, and in Him we see what we are to

become. Our real life is something we have never yet really tested; it is hid with Christ in God.

This does not mean that if we live in fellowship with God we can always do at once what we attempt. History is a long process and God has plenty of time for the fulfilment of His purpose. And so when it is said by ignorant journalists or imprudent bishops that because our cause in the great war is just, therefore if God exists He will give us victory, we must remind ourselves that the cause of Assyria and of Babylon was not just, yet they prevailed against Israel and that Christ was sent to the Cross. But if Christianity means anything at all, it means that those who are faithful to its principles secure the establishment of those principles at last, if not at first, because they are the expression of that Mind and Will which is the ultimate truth of all things.

How shall we apply all of this to ourselves? First in a new devotion to the entirely dull duties of every day. Tasks may be dismal and the routine of life rather dreary; in winning the power to do these things with

thoroughness you qualify more than in any other one way for responsibilities ; it is he who is "faithful in a few things," or in little things, who is entrusted with the responsibility of "ruling over many things." That first ; and in the early stages of our training nothing quite equals it in importance.

Secondly, you must keep alive by prayer and communion your own intercourse with God. Do not be frightened by the times when all your prayers seem cold and dead. Go on fixing your mind on what we know of God as He has shown Himself to us in Christ ; and at least once every day say the Lord's Prayer slowly, trying hard to mean some one petition in it with all your soul—and a different one each day. Then come regularly to receive the Body that was broken for the Kingdom of God and the Blood that was shed for the Kingdom of God, determined that your lives shall also become in the power of Christ lives of sacrifice for the Kingdom of God.

And once more learn to realise your membership in the Church. We have been content for the most part to be religious one by one ; there has been no united army of

Christian people determined to order the world on Christian principles. The Church exists to be such an army, but because we have not appreciated the need for unity of aim and action, it has become a mere organisation for maintaining public worship and ministering to individual souls. The result is that in the great affairs which go to make up the history of mankind the Church, as a society, hardly counts at all. The first necessity for ourselves and for the world is to rouse the Church to a fuller understanding of its own responsibilities. The Kingdom of God is like other kingdoms at least in this, that if its army is not ready when hostile forces gather against it, it suffers loss. The Church is the Army of the Kingdom of God, and it manifestly is not ready.

There are two supreme problems that will have before very long to be solved. One is the international; one is the industrial. Both are in the last resort moral questions. Before the war we did not have to consider ultimate questions very closely. Our system was there, and we had to deal with it piece by piece. But now the whole fabric has

come tumbling down and we have to rebuild it from the foundation. Consequently we have definitely to choose our foundation-principles. Are we going to build again upon competing selfishness and mutual distrust? Or are we going to try this time to build on the one truth of all things, the revealed nature of God, the supremacy of Love? Are we, in other words, going at last to recognise that all forms of self-seeking, in man or in nation, are really self-destructive? "He that would save his life, the same shall lose it." Only in service of what lies beyond ourselves, only in service of the Kingdom of God, in which our nation, with others, is a province, is peace or joy to be found.

And so we come back to the starting point. We are to live here as citizens of the Kingdom of God. And we can only do that truly and effectively if our affections are set on things above, that is to say, on love and beauty and truth, whose value is in themselves and cannot be touched by accident or by death; not on things on the earth—greatness or honour or riches or any other thing whose value is determined by a comparison between

ourselves and other people. And your first duty and need in your preparation for the battle of the Lord is to learn the fellowship with Christ by which chiefly men are raised to that higher plane.

Think of Him then, the Hero-Redeemer, "Who for the joy that was set before Him," the joy of a world won by Him for His Father's Kingdom, "endured the Cross in scorn of contempt"; hear Him as He pleads with your self-will; obey Him as He calls to sacrifice. In Him, and nowhere else, is the power by which you must serve Him. "Ye died": in comparison with the claim that is made, you found yourselves helpless: "your life hath been hid with Christ in God." There, if you will but seek and find it, is the power that can once more "turn the world upside down." But you must truly seek it. The water that turns the wheels of the world's machinery has its source in the high and lonely places. Just because you are called, as all of us are called to-day, to so supremely great a task, take heed that nothing in yourself is spoiling your fitness for that high responsibility. Be diligent in the dull daily work;

judge your own character by Christ's demand and example and by no lower standard; and kneel daily before the Cross of His triumphant humiliation, that you may hear the voice of the King of Kings, as, crowned with glory and thorns, He calls you to a service in which self must be either offered or forgotten, a service which yet is perfect freedom because it is rendered to Almighty Love.

XIX

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INCARNATION

(Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, *February* 10*th*, 1918.)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. . . . And the Word was made flesh."—S. John i. 1, 2, 3, 14.

Self-expression is inherent in the very nature of God. The distinction that has often been drawn between the substance and the will of God can never be more than provisional. God is spirit; and in spiritual beings there is nothing more substantial than will. The psychology which treats will as a separate entity somehow attached to an independently subsisting soul has never been more than a popular travesty, and has now

disappeared even from the popular imagination. But as applied to the Divine Spirit the distinction has real value if once the whole conception of God is allowed to fall short of the Christian standard. If for one moment it is forgotten that God is Love, then to attribute self-expression to His very nature must initiate a tendency towards Pantheism and so depreciate His majesty. It is for no physical necessity, nor for any moral necessity other than that arising out of His love, that God created the universe. So far it is true to say that the creation was an act of His will, and not a mere consequence of His being what He is.

But if He is truly described as Love, then at once it is clear that no distinction can be drawn between His will and His substance and that the motive for drawing such a distinction is gone. Love is itself a disposition and energy of the will, and if this is what God is, then His very substance is will. But there is no longer any danger in the admission of this. The peril of Pantheism is vanished. For the essential evil of Pantheism is its degradation of the Creator into a mere soul,

or even a mere logical ground, of the Universe, whose character has to be constructed by a process of induction from the facts of experience in past and present. If God is just the Unknowable, from whose being the universe has resulted, such Pantheism cannot be avoided; and to regard the creation as a necessary act on the part of God will lead to this, unless God is truly believed to be Love, and all necessary consequences of His being are therefore regarded as expressions of Love.

But God is Love. And if we say that the universe is necessary to God, as I for one should certainly say, we mean that because He is Love He needs it as the object of His love, and not that He needs it for the satisfaction of any self-regarding desire nor that it is an automatic emanation. He made all things, and by His will they came to be. "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created." All things are the creation of the will of God, the will of Love. Because He is Love, He made them; and in this sense they are

the necessary product of the Divine Nature. Love must declare itself. From all eternity it is self-revealing. "The Word was in the beginning with God." This delivers us also from the thought of the creation as an unnecessary act of arbitrary power, as represented in the words attributed to Jehovah by Ahasuerus in Shelley's poem:

> "From an eternity of idleness
> I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
> From nothing; rested, and created man."

Creation is that self-revelation which is implicit in the very nature of God. What we mean by creation may not exhaust this; and the universe as we know it may be only a fraction of what flows from the love of God. But God's revelation of Himself it is, a revelation which His Nature, being Love, inevitably gives. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by means of It, and apart from It hath not one thing come to be."

But if this is true, it is a natural and almost inevitable inference that the universe, in all its parts, is an expression of the divine love.

That raises at once the whole problem of evil with which it would be absurd to deal in a passing paragraph.[1] But it raises also the question of the uniformities of nature, and their relation to the divine purpose of Love, which we are now assuming to be the ground of the universe. They appear to be rigid, and either purposeless or cruel. In these days the devastating influence of accident is forced violently upon our minds. The so-called "fatalism of the trenches" is a natural and almost inevitable reaction of the human mind to circumstances. And there can be no doubt that the doctrine of Special Providences has often been so presented as to invite ridicule and prepare for disillusionment. If then we start from the belief that God is Love, or, in other words, that all which happens is somehow the expression of the Love which is the source of existence, what are we to say about the ruthless uniformity of nature?

It is not enough to point, as many have pointed, to the majesty of inexorable law and the spiritual beauty of perfect order. Such

[1] I may perhaps refer to my attempt to handle it in *Mens Creatrix* (Macmillan).

considerations are mainly æsthetic in character, and while they afford some relief to a mind oppressed by the sense of the brutality of things, it is rather by way of anodyne than of remedy. The somewhat mechanical nature of Kant, who took his afternoon walk with such regularity that, as Heine said, the people set their watches by him, might appropriately find its chief object of reverence in the starry heavens above and the moral law within. But if after all the universe is only a spinning top, it does not become essentially more impressive than other spinning tops merely because it is a great deal bigger; and the moral law, as Kant understood it, is a ghostly abstraction of paralysing frigidity. Mere orderliness may perhaps be the supreme characteristic of nature, and mere universality the criterion of moral conduct; but there does not appear to be anything intrinsically excellent in either.

What is the need of love? It is for answering love. The only purpose for which we can conceive love making a world would be the winning from it of love corresponding to itself. The chief concern of the Creator must

therefore be the conscious inhabitants of His universe. No doubt God shares the joy of contemplation. In the sisterhood of Beauty, Good and Knowledge, it is not the second alone that enters into the divine perfection. But love cannot ever put anything before itself. Whoever loves, knows that love is the best of all things known to him. It cannot gaze with satisfaction on the most imposing spectacle of majestic order if it knows that sentient bodies and aspiring souls are being crushed beneath the grinding wheels of some Juggernaut car of uniformity.

But love, while the highest thing known to us, yet has many qualities. The love of a shallow or shifty soul is a thing less precious than the love which is rooted on the rock of eternal trust, secure against all chances and changes of this mortal life. The deepening and strengthening of the soul is therefore necessarily to be included among the purposes of Love. The world must be regarded as a "Vale of Soul-making," to use the phrase of Keats which Professor Bosanquet has lately made familiar, and experience shows beyond any sort of question that the action of natural

uniformity in producing what we call accidents is one of the most efficient instruments of soul-making. This thought must be added to the more obvious consideration that apart from natural uniformity there could be no rational life at all. If we could not count with reasonable certainty on the rising of the sun, the recurrence of the seasons, the permanent action of such laws as the law of gravitation, all planning for the future, and therefore all purpose, and therefore again all moral value in life, would utterly disappear.

That is true ; but it is not enough. For on a superficial view it might be argued that uniformity might well be so general a principle as to subserve all needs of purposive action, and yet be liable to interference whenever its unimpeded activity would tend to dire suffering or disaster. Why should an earthquake or volcanic eruption be permitted to create widespread havoc and misery ? In general terms we may answer that the occurrence of such disasters is definitely wholesome for such a race as ours. If God intervened to check the operation of His laws whenever it would bring suffering, we should become morally flabby in

a very short time. The faith that is healthy to the soul is not that which says: "I have put my trust in God, who will prevent flesh or accident from injuring me," but that which says: "I have put my trust in God, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." When faith has struck its roots clean through the shifting soil of temporal events and has clasped the rock of God's eternal love, it reaches for the first time its own dignity and worth. And it is chiefly the force of accident which drives it to do so. It is through the judgment of accident, when one is taken and another left, that we are chiefly judged in respect of the depth of our faith; and it is chiefly through the experience of accident that we apprehend the truth that here we have no abiding city but we seek that which is to come.

No doubt if we ever lose hold of our faith in the supremacy of love, such a position becomes intolerable. For then we think of love as showing itself in indulgence, and begin to ask of what sort is the love of God, if in order to make me love Him he will kill my friend? Is it not a mere selfish jealousy and no real love at all? But if we hold fast to our

belief in love's supremacy, not only in power, but in moral worth, we shall see that love's aim will not be to make us happy but to make us perfect in love. No doubt, without belief in immortality this whole method of thought becomes impracticable. But if the aim of God's love is first to make us perfect in love, and if our life on earth is a mere flicker of the eyelids in comparison with the long stretches of the life everlasting, then it becomes a perfectly reasonable proposition, as I believe it is profoundly true, to say that the bullet, or the street accident, which kills my dearest friend *may* be alike for him and for me a sacrament of the love of God.

This does not mean that the suffering in the world is not evil, still less that the hatred which causes much of the suffering is not evil. But it does mean that all things, evil included, work together for good to them that love God or are learning to love Him.

Such considerations are not in any sense remote from the practical realities of religion. When we pray for our friends in the trenches, what do we really expect? Do we even faintly hope that God will deflect bullets to

keep them safe? I am very sure that God could do so if He saw it to be best. But there is no reason to suppose that it would be best; rather the contrary. No; our prayer should be offered in the hope that God will sustain their loyalty and courage, and also their reasonable caution, whereby they may be saved from unnecessary perils; but chiefly also that He would, in answer to our prayers, make His Presence known to their souls, so that whatever may chance they will repose in perfect peace on the everlasting arms of His fatherly love, and may themselves have something of the love towards God which will secure that all things in life or in death work together for their good.

It is perhaps worth while to pause at this point and remind ourselves that the Laws of Nature are nothing but summaries of the way in which physical objects have been observed to behave. It is, of course, a perfect truism to say that the same cause must always have the same effect. And it may be worth while to repeat once more the well-worn remark that the religious value of miracles is not due to any breach of natural uniformity, but precisely to

its observance. An ordinary man tries to walk on the water, and sinks; an extraordinary man attempts the same thing with success. Such value as there may be in this depends entirely on the abnormality of both cause and effect. Whether we argue from the unique effect to the uniqueness of the cause, or *vice versa*, this remains true.

Now if it be true that natural laws are not independently known forces (which would be *verae causae*), but summaries of the way in which bodies have been observed to behave, there can be no objection, except one springing from sheer prejudice and mental inertia, to the doctrine that these observed uniformities are not themselves the ultimate explanation of what happens, but are themselves to be explained as the expression of the spiritual power controlling all things. And this is philosophically very far superior as a hypothesis, because purpose is a known force, a *vera causa*, and is a sufficient explanation of any occurrences of which it can be alleged to be the origin.

This hypothesis is proclaimed by Christianity as the Gospel. There is in the New Testament

no hint of any limitation of the divine authority. All things were made through the agency of the Word of God; creation is His revelation of Himself. "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." But this is no hypothesis tentatively offered. It is a sure conviction wrought in the soul by contact with Jesus of Nazareth, in whom His own most intimate friend found himself driven to declare that this same world-making and world-controlling Word of God had appeared on earth, living as Man amongst men. This central Christian belief is not an intrusion into an alien order of things; it is the culmination and crowning point of that whole sacramental view of the world which we have been describing. And the centre and pivot of the world is thus seen to be Love; for S. Paul's lyrical ode to Love is a character sketch of his Master. Read "Christ" instead of "Love" throughout and you will see that this is true, and will know where S. Paul learnt the nature of Love.

It must be insisted that the human life of the Incarnate Word of God was perfectly and utterly human. The New Testament gives no encouragement to the effort to separate within it the spheres of the Divine and the Human Natures. He was in all things made like unto His brethren; He was made perfect through suffering, learning obedience by the things which He suffered. He grew up to the perfected unity with the Father, and yet at every stage was in unity with Him. This may be hard to express, but is not specially hard to understand. If we trace the life of a great man from infancy to old age, we know that the man is more than the child, yet that the child may have perfectly fulfilled his own part. So Christ is perfect as child, as youth, as man. In every stage He corresponds to the divine Will for him at that stage; but in that unbroken correspondence to the divine Will He is carried forward step by step until He is called to make the absolute surrender wherein He reaches the perfection of obedience and unity with God beyond which there is no further step to take. In the moral sphere His

Deity reveals itself through a perfect, yet normal, Humanity.

But such correspondence with the divine Will on the part of human nature is itself unique. And it is therefore in no way and from no justifiable point of view incredible that He should have been born into the world without human volition or action but through the energy of the Holy Ghost, or, in other words, of God's love at work in the world. Nor is it in any way incredible that the Body which had been the organ of that unique life should itself be delivered out of the corruption of death. It is indeed more worthy of notice that the deliverance did not come until the last worst agony had been faced and endured. He was not saved from suffering, but through suffering; and it is so that He saves us.

But while the events connected with the beginning and close of His earthly ministry are unique, they are from the point of view we have adopted no interruption of the essential orderliness of things but rather a conspicuous instance of it. The matter may be considered to greater advantage in connexion with other "miracles." If we trust the record

given in the Fourth Gospel, we find our Lord clearly stating that He is exerting powers which we also can exert. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." The control of mind over matter is a realm almost unexplored by science. We are beginning again to pay attention to the startling phenomena of levitation and the like. The Psychical Research Society has compelled the recognition of certain aspects of experience to which common sense, trained in nineteenth century habits of thought, would gladly have been blind. Our inability to use matter more freely through our faith in God has probably been due in large measure to scientific prejudice. Its uniformities will not indeed become multiformities to suit our wishes. But the Gospel record seems to say that if our wills are given to God, we are possessed of powers which we do not now know to exist because we have not tried to exercise them. If it be so, it is no more a breach of uniformity than was the first wireless message ever sent. That, too, was a

novelty in experience, due to the discovery and first use of powers that had been there before.

The traditional theology of the Church, at least as popularly expounded, has never been thoroughgoing in its philosophy of the Incarnation. It has approached the subject, as it was bound to do, with certain preconceived notions as to the nature of God and the nature of Man, and has never allowed the revelation given in the historic fact to react fully on those conceptions. Thus what we see on the Cross is the Suffering of God; and it is the divine Passion that converts. Yet a Greek notion of the divine impassivity has been allowed to prevent theology from fully grasping and expressing what every simple believer knows perfectly well. Similarly it has been assumed that human powers are limited to those with which apart from faith we are familiar; therefore all that Christ did which we are unaccustomed to suppose that we could do is attributed to His Divinity and not to His Humanity. But similar actions are reported of His Apostles, of Saints in all ages, and indeed of holy men other than

Christian. Thus we have failed to find in the Incarnation either the perfect revelation of God, for we do not read back His agony into the Life of God, or the perfect revelation of Man, for we exclude from the human sphere all in which He differs from ourselves. The result is virtually an unconscious Arianism, which is of small philosophic or spiritual value.

But the teaching of the New Testament is quite plain. In the Gospels we read the story of a perfectly human Life that was lived by God. We spoil its value utterly if we regard the Life as in any way other than human, or Him who lived it as in any way other than God. As we watch Him, we are watching God; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But we watch God living under strictly human conditions; "it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren."

I have glanced at all that this involves with regard to our powers and what they might be, if we were wholly given to God and without misgiving sought to act for Him by means of those powers heightened through His consecration. "Greater works than these shall

he do." What we see in Christ is the capacity of human nature when God dwells in it. That, and because of Christ's achievement even more than that, will be possible for the man who in Christ gives himself to God. But I cannot now pursue that theme.

The revelation of absolute Godhead in sheer Humanity is possible and intelligible because the whole creation, with man who is (so far as this planet is concerned) its crown, is itself already the self-revelation of God. Its order is the impress of His Reason ; its beauty is the reflection of His ; and man with his aspirations and endeavours is the uprising in the creation of the only perfect response to His intention, because the only one with freedom to choose love instead of hostility or neglect. In all the world we see God ; in man, though only fitfully, His light shines brightest. But in the one perfection of manhood the light streams forth unflickering and in plenitude of strength, "the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His person."

Apart from that historic event, when there appeared in mid-course of history the Power that controls all history, and of Whose Will all

history is the unfolding, we could never have known that the nature of that Power is love. Even when the revelation is given it is a belief hard to hold steady.

> Does God love ?
> And will ye hold that faith against the world ?

For it is against the world, not only or chiefly of men, but of experience generally and of nature as known to us, that we must hold that faith if we hold it at all. In this sense it is true that in the Incarnation God breaks in upon history as though from outside. And yet it is not from without. For all its course is guided by Himself, and His appearance in the midst of it is just the most potent means by which He carries it forward to the completion of His eternal purpose.

But if the explanation of all things be in Love—Love such as lived once in Palestine and died on Golgotha and rose again—it follows that we can only understand and rightly enjoy the world if we ourselves are filled with Love. Let me try to express my argument in a series of quotations from the Meditations of Thomas Traherne ; they are all taken from the first Century of Meditations. "The

Living and True God was from all eternity, and from all eternity wanted like a God. He wanted the communication of His divine essence and persons to enjoy it. He wanted Worlds, He wanted Spectators, He wanted Joys, He wanted Treasures. He wanted, yet He wanted not, for He had them" (41). "You must want like a God that you may be satisfied like God. Were you not made in His Image?" (44). "Your enjoyment of the world is never right, till every morning you awake in Heaven" (28). "Till you love men so as to desire their happiness with a thirst equal to the zeal of your own: till you delight in God for being good to all: you never enjoy the world" (30). "Yet, further, you never enjoy the world aright, till you so love the beauty of enjoying it, that you are covetous and earnest to persuade others to enjoy it. And so perfectly hate the abominable corruption of men in despising it, that you had rather suffer the flames of Hell than willingly be guilty of their error. There is so much blindness and ingratitude and damned folly in it. The world is a mirror of infinite beauty, yet no man sees it. It is a temple of Majesty,

yet no man regards it. It is a region of Light and Peace, did not men disquiet it. It is the Paradise of God" (31). "Your enjoyment is never right, till you esteem every soul so great a treasure as our Saviour doth" (39). "Wouldest thou love God alone? God alone cannot be beloved. He cannot be loved with a finite love, because He is infinite. Were He beloved alone, His love would be limited. He must be loved in all with an unlimited love, even in all His doings, in all His friends, in all His creatures. Everywhere in all things thou must meet His love. And this the Law of Nature commands. And it is thy glory that thou art fitted for it. His love unto thee is the law and measure of thine unto Him: His love unto all others the law and obligation of thine unto all" (72).

The universe, then, is a sacrament in which we truly find God. In creation He uttered the Word that expresses His thought, and feeling, and will. The meaning of spoken words is truly in the words, though one who is ignorant of the language may hear the sounds without grasping the meaning. But he who understands, finds the meaning there;

he does not put it there. So it is in every true sacrament. The spiritual gift is truly there, though not all have the eyes to see, or the capacity to receive it. God is in the world, in mankind, above all in Jesus Christ; but only by His Holy Spirit can we find Him there. But His Holy Spirit is just the energy of active love. It is by Love at work in our hearts that we become aware of the Love which is in the world, which made the world, which redeemed the world, which guides the world to its own consummation in Love.

If we are Christians we know all this. But do we act upon it? We read the gospels, we pray, we receive into ourselves the very life of Love expressed in its own supremest sacrifice—the Body broken and the Blood outpoured; but are we all the while expecting to find our lives suffused with Love and transformed into its likeness? God, because He is Love, will not force our wills or hearts. Are we like the Pharisees, who saw some of the acts of incarnate Love and heard some of His words, even as the beloved disciple saw and heard; yet to him they were the utterance of the Word of Life, to them an imposture and

a blasphemy. Do we reach only the outside? or do we perhaps penetrate to the inner glory with half our nature and no more? There is peace for this distracted world in one way, and in one way only; it is that way which is also the Truth and the Life. In other words, if we will believe that love is the source and inner truth of all things, and then live accordingly, we shall find what mankind is seeking. If we build the new world that must arise after the war and its judgment is passed on the love that seeks not its own, it will be the world we hope for. In social life, in industrial life, in political life, in international life, if we follow the way of love that seeketh not its own, we shall find that the world is indeed the Paradise of God. For the pioneers along that way there is much suffering to be faced; but for the joy that is set before us we will endure, in scorn of the world's contempt.

O Jesus, Master and Lord, pour into our hearts Thine own heroic Love, that being filled with Love we may know the Love that passeth knowledge, and live in the unknown power of Love to win men to trust in Love, to the glory of God Who is Love. Amen.

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